

AVENGERS! SLIDERS! BLADE!

CURTIS 50235 SCI-FI UNIVERSE

SCI-FI UNIVERSE



Preview

\$3.99US \$4.99CAN

\$3.99

CAN \$4.99

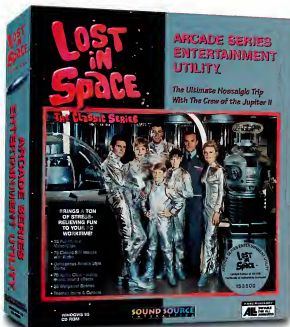
OCTOBER 1998

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY UNTIL OCTOBER 26



100

"Danger, Will Robinson!"...



WINDOWS 95 CD-ROM

...this could be too much fun!

Blast off into the retro-cool future of *Lost In Space: The Classic Series*, where comp, kitsch and corrotmen ore close encounters of the funniest kind!

Customize your PC with an out-of-this-world collection of exciting, hilarious and even functional media: a screen saver, video clips, audia clips, wallpaper, icons, animated cursors... PLUS an outrageous arcade-style mini game.

Join the crew of the Jupiter II on their new mission: to save you from boredom as you wark on your computer!

Available now at these and other fine retailers:



New Line
Cinema

**SOUND SOURCE
INTERACTIVE**

For more information:
www.soundsourceinteractive.com
or (800) 877-4778

**Attention
Fans and Collectors! Grab this
Limited Edition, Serial Numbered
product while you can!**

Edition limited to 100,000 units worldwide.

© 1998 Space Productions. Licensed by New Line Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Arcade Series Limited Edition Entertainment Utility TM & © 1998 Sound Source Interactive, Inc. The New Line Cinema logo is a trademark of New Line Cinema Corporation.

A DAZZLING SCI-FI MIND-BENDER
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF *THE CROW*.

rufus
sewell

kiefer
sutherland

jennifer
connelly

william
hurt

DARK CITY

from the director of "The Crow"



They built the city to see what makes us tick.
Last night one of us went off.



"Sets a bold new standard for science fiction!"

Rent it now at video stores everywhere!
Also available on 

"We are excited to have a Wisconsin-based company in the portfolio of our private equity fund. The company has a strong track record of growth and profitability, and we believe it has significant potential for future success. We are looking forward to working with the management team to drive the company's continued growth and success."



SCI-FI UNIVERSE

FEATURES:

34

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE

Ralph Fiennes and Uma Thurman take on Sean Connery as Great Britain's Earth-saving dynamic duo.

40

SCI-FI'S FALL TV PREVIEW

The new TV season brings a wealth of riches for hungry sci-fi fans.

48

MAKING THE BLADE

Move over, Buffy! Wesley Snipes kicks butt as Marvel Comics' brooding vampire slayer.

54

STAR SLIDER

When it comes to the difficulties of bringing good SF to television, John Rhys-Davies feels your pain.

60

DR. STRANGEVIDEO

An All-Purpose Guide to the Identification and classification of science-fictional B-movies!

72

SCREAM, TOO

The X-Files meets small town America as X-alumni demonstrate their own *Disturbing Behavior*.

DEPARTMENTS:

06 EDITORIAL

08 COMMUNIQUE

14 PREMIERE

18 COOL SCI-FI COMICS

22 COOL SCI-FI GAMES

28 COOL SCI-FI VIDEOS

32 COOL SCI-FI BOOKS

78 RANT

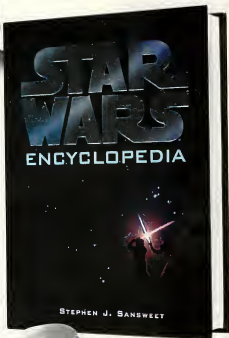
COVER: This fall's TV season promises to be a wonderful assemblage of Sci-Fi. Fantasy and Horror that will bring changes to our old friends and introduce us to exciting new creatures.

Sci-Fi Universe (ISSN 1077-8666) is published 6 times per year by Sovereign Music Co., Inc., 1335 Sunset Mills Rd., Madison, WI 53740. (703) 471-1536. Periodicals Post Payment Paid at Boston, MA and additional mailing offices. Sci-Fi Universe, Volume 4, Number 6, © 1995 by Sovereign Music. All rights reserved. The Opinions expressed in Sci-Fi Universe are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Sovereign Music. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. Individuals who wish to publish their work in Sci-Fi Universe must submit a signed copy of their work to the appropriate editor. Questions on content and style should be directed to the Editor. Sci-Fi Universe Circulation: P.O. Box 260, Mt. Morris, IL 60061-0260. Single copies: \$1.00 plus \$1 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.: \$15.95, Canada and Mexico: \$21.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send address mail to Sci-Fi Universe, 11265 Sunset Hills Rd., Reston, VA 20190. Sci-Fi Universe welcomes reader's advertisements but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to Sci-Fi Universe, P.O. Box 260, Mt. Morris, IL 60061-0260.



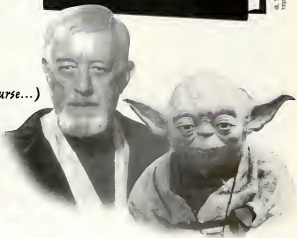
Can't get your fill of
STAR WARS information?

Then turn to the ultimate
source of knowledge
in the universe!



© TM & © 1999 Lucasfilm Ltd.
http://www.starwars.com

(Not counting these guys, of course...)



On sale in July

**DEL
REY**

Stories That Define Imagination
A Division of
The Ballantine Publishing Group

Reader Reviews Contests Special Offers free newsletter

www.randomhouse.com/delrey

free book giveaways inside information author interviews



EDITORIAL

Horror's future is far from horrible.

I've just returned from the Horror Writers Association annual meeting, and believe me, the mood that weekend belied the name of the organization—horrific. Though there was laughter when writers gathered in the bar, and a casual observer might be fooled by people's smiles, the predictions of the future of written Horror were grim. Keynote speaker Doug Winter devoted his sermon to the death of Horror, and proceeded to parcel out the writers' own portion of guilt for the genre's passing.

Writers have been complaining about the death of Horror for years. And the novelists and short story writers who've been complaining have for the most part been correct. There's no major Horror magazine, and book publishers that used to have lines devoted to horror novels have let them wither away. Horror has come down to brand names such as Koontz and Straub and Rice. The endless novels by midlist horror writers that a decade ago festooned the bookshelves have disappeared like a vampire once a stake goes through its heart. For years, this HWA meeting has seemed more like a wake than a party, and this year was no different.

And yet, while horror practitioners in the realms of print are in a state of mourning, those who work in celluloid are celebrating as they never have before. *The X-Files* has gone from cult hit to national fad, and as I write these words will open tomorrow as a feature film nationwide. Wes Craven and Kevin Williamson have reinvented the curious subgenre known as the teen slasher flick, and have so turned on its head the old rule about how sequels suck that we're all eagerly awaiting *Scream 3*. Just in this issue alone, we're telling you about such films as *Blade* and *Disturbing Behavior*, and the future holds another *Halloween*. A look at our Fall TV Preview feature article will show you that *Buffy* will be continuing to slay those vampires and the dark and disturbing *Millennium* will return for a third season. They'll be joined on your television screen by a host of other dark fantasies—*Demon Hunters*, *Witches*, *Magicians*.

Why this vast gulf between the reception of the printed word and that of moving pictures? The public seems to not only like horror, it loves Horror! Why are the novel-

ists and short story writers being given the cold shoulder while film and Television producers are scrambling to keep up with the public's apparently insatiable appetite?

Doug Winter would have us blame the writers themselves, whose failure of the imagination did not produce sufficient top-notch works to tempt the readers to wander away from the brand names. He posits that after being burned one too many times by derivative plots and hackneyed characters, readers scurried back to Barker and King, knowing that only there would they get their money's worth. Once the Horror boom taught readers that a novel by an unknown stood a high chance of delivering disappointment, they stayed away in droves.

That's one theory. But I think something more is at work here that is only visible when you look beyond the Horror genre alone. Though Science Fiction has a larger segment of the publishing market than does Horror, with many book companies devoted to the product, SF also evidences the wide disparity in the level of success of the books versus the films and TV shows. If you listen to SF writers, they will tell you how media is taking over their world, with *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* novels squeezing out the first novel and the midlist author. I don't think there are any writers out there who are sanguine about the future of the printed word, or not envious of the greater audiences of those who tell their stories on movie and TV screens.

Horror writers do not stand alone. All writers are members of the same armed camp. A book requires action, while a moviegoer can sit back and let the sound and pictures wash over him. It's like the difference between playing a basketball game, or merely watching one. Squeezing the juice out of a book or short story will always require greater effort, and it is no insult to films and television to say that they are easier to ingest. There will always be fewer lovers of words than there are lovers of pictures, but as for those who predict in fear that the words will wither away? That's one horror story that just isn't going to happen. ☺

— Scott Edelman

MARK HINTZ
PUBLISHER

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

SCOTT EDELMAN
EDITOR

STEPHEN VANN
ART DIRECTOR

CHRISTINA KRUG
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR

BRIAN MURPHY
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

MARTY BAUMANN, MATT BRADY,
PAUL DI FILIPPO, CORY
DOCTOROW, DAVID HONIGS-
BERG, JAMES LOWDER, ALBERT
ORTEGA, MELISSA J. PERENSON,
DAN PEREZ, STEVEN PUCHALSKI,
JOSEPH RAZON, CRAIG REID,
ANTHONY WRIGHT
CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICIA A. ALLEN
CAROLE R. PASCOE
COPY EDITORS

JEFF SULLIVANT
PHOTO EDITOR



AMANDA ZELONES
FINANCE MANAGER

DIANE BONIFANTI
BUSINESS MANAGER

KELLY KING
FULFILLMENT CONSULTANT

CARI WYNNE
PRODUCTION MANAGER

JULIAN CHRISTOPHER
ALI LORRAINE
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

STEVE DORBOWSKI
CIRCULATION MANAGER

ARTHUR O'HARE
NEWSSTAND CONSULTANT

JOE VARDIA
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

KATE CHAPMAN
ADVERTISING ASSISTANT

SOVEREIGN MEDIA
11305 Sunset Hills Rd.
Reston, VA 20190
703-471-1556 / FAX: 703-471-1559
e-mail: sovmedia@erols.com
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Don't just *SEND* mail...

...SHIP IT!

With STAR TREK™ Return Address Labels from The Anthony Grandlo Company you'll "ship" your mail with striking images of Starfleet's finest ships and Space Station Deep Space 9.

Displayed in full color with rich colorful borders, these exciting self-adhesive labels will make your mail anything but ordinary!

Star Trek Checks and Checkbook Covers also available from
The Anthony Grantco Company



Both styles - 144 labels per set!

Satisfaction Guaranteed



Line 1	STYLE A		1 Box completed under terms will payment to: The Anthony Grading Company Post Office Box 23267 Jacksonville, Florida 32241-3267	# of sets	X \$9.95 per set =
Line 2				FL Sales Tax (at 6.6%) =	
Line 3				Shipping	\$1.25 per set =
Line 4	STYLE B		OT 2 Phone Toll Free 1-800-742-83-5	YFSU	TOTAL
Line 5				ByPhone Phone ()	=
Line 6					

TM 54-108, Revision 1, 1962. All Rights Reserved. This Text and Diagrams are the property of the U.S. Government. Reproduction in whole or in part is permitted.

A New Dimension in STAR TREK™ Checks



THE NEXT GENERATION™
8 Exciting Scenes!

8 Exciting Scenes



Exclusive Federation Check Points:

- **A For the first time ever in this galaxy!**
 - 8 rotating scenes, **THE BIGGEST SERIES EVER!**
 - Official STAR TREK 50th Anniversary Logo on the back.
 - Fediverse security features for friend protection.
- **Our Gift:** Matching USS ENTERPRISE NCC-1701-A Checklist Book - at Warp Speed!
- **Convenience:** set available for the collector or those without checking accounts.
- **A Stellar Gift Idea:** Our gift certificates for your family and friends.

100% USA checks are accepted by hosts throughout the galaxy but are only available in this solar system from the Anthony Graphic Company. Send for your 100% USA THE NEXT GENERATION checks just off the printing press, because this offer will only orbit for a limited time!

Instructions: To ensure correct book return, please follow these instructions carefully:

1. Send a transfer form or valid check from your existing check supply. Indicate any routing changes. No photocopies please!
2. Also send a deposit slip from your existing check supply.
3. Complete and include the entry form below.
4. Enclose a check payable to The Anthony Graden Company.

Allow four weeks from receipt of order for regular delivery. Checks will be mailed to the address printed on your checks.

Satisfaction Guaranteed

TM & © 1995, Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.
GSM, TM & ® and related service and trademarks of Paramount Pictures. The Jeffrey Gordin Company. Authorized Use.

Yes! I WANT THE NEW
STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION
CHECK BOXES

[illegible]

Start my check of number _____
 (if no number is assigned we will start with 1001)

Name _____
Daytime phone # (____) _____
Mail to:
The Anthony Grantio Company
P.O. Box 23098
Jacksonville, FL 32241-3098



*with check series purchase
also sold separately

Vulcans, Klingons, and editorial errors.

To the Head Honchos at *SFU*:

I was reading your magazine, specifically the article about *Star Trek: Voyager*. Suddenly, I became intensely mortified for you when I saw that Tuvok had been listed as—gasp—a Klingon! Since when do Klingons have pointed ears? I laughed out loud and swore to write you a note about it. This is not meant as a “flame,” but as constructive criticism.

Don’t go too hard on the poor guy who created this glaring typo; when someone at Paramount, 30 years ago, airbrushed Spock’s ears closer to human length, they nearly eviscerated this poor little technician... but I’m sure everyone hits the juke occasionally.

While I’m at it, a differing point of view: Your #1 Science Bloopers is mostly untrue in *Star Trek*. I offer as proof: to explore strange new worlds... to seek out new life and new civilizations... as well as Spock’s insatiable curiosity.

Thank you for listening to my ranting. And please, make the species correction!

FAN 4 ever,
Lisa “Darth Vader” Luxtona

«All we can say is—mea culpa, mea maxima, maxima culpa! That’s what we get for missing off one last caption when the printer is howling at the door. We’ll do our best to make sure it never happens again.»

Dear Paul T. Riddell:

I, as a Science Fiction fan, am glad that more and more people come to the genre. I have seen *Babylon 5* a few times, and I noticed it to be a quality show, though since I have not seen it constantly and from the beginning, I did not get hooked. (I just didn’t get the plot when I first saw it.) But I am a bit hurt about the comments you made on *Star Trek* and its fans. I am a Middle Core *ST* fan. While I do know by heart all episodes of *The Next Generation*, even by name, I agree—those who dress up every weekend as Riker or Worf are a bit on the unstable side. But, I am really unhappy with your innuendoes about special FX being done just so the viewer turns his brain off. Watch *ST: TNG* carefully—every effect is there for a reason, not just to impress. And also, who gives you the right to

say that Internet and Science Fiction are Nerdy-Only things? Let me remind you that Bill Gates, while he may look like a nerd, has more money than you, me, your family, your boss, and most people you know combined.

Marique Mata C.

Dear Mr. Edelman:

I first picked up a copy of *Sci-Fi Universe* on a trip to America to visit friends, and since the changeover you have continued to improve a great magazine. The *B5* special and *ST:DS9* articles were excellent and I can only commend you on an excellent magazine. It is just a shame I have to wait 2-3 extra weeks to get it on import here in England.

Great work!

Nick Jenkins

To the Editor:

I have my own list of “Sci-Fi’s Biggest (Scientific) Blunders”:

Space is real, real huge. So how are spaceships able to get from one star to another in practically no time while sliding slowly past the camera? And did you ever notice how small the planets they visit are? (e.g., do a guesstimate of the size of the planet whose debris ring the *Voyager* passes over in the opening credits).

Any planet large enough to hold a spherical shape, let alone a breathable atmosphere, will take some doing to get off of. And once you reach orbit, getting to the next planet by a transfer orbit will take months. A rocket engine using nuclear fusion might get you there sooner, but even that won’t get you to the next star in your lifetime (and the amount of hydrogen you’d have to use is staggering). So how can spaceships using some sort of rocket engine zip around so quickly, routinely land on and leave planets, and do all sorts of neat tricks like right turns and going in reverse without turning around?

I have no problem with the idea of humanoid aliens—after all, fish

and whales look like each other, and it makes more sense that a tool-user might be a biped with arms rather than a giant insect. But wouldn’t our food and/or germs be dangerous to each other? (Forget about sex.) And why do Federation com badges translate every language but Klingon?

Like your writer Geoffrey A. Landis I wonder why no one with at least a high-school grasp of science reads those scripts (E.g., couldn’t the *Jupiter 2* have found out that the time-disturbance repelled the ship at the end of the movie, instead of finding out you can fly through a planet!).

Don Scherck

Dear *SFU*:

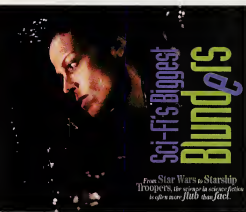
First, I must apologize for the absence of a substantial critique in my letter. It seems the ridiculous and superficial nature of *Trek*ie chat rooms has finally gotten to me. I hope sarcasm will make my consternation sound like a humorous intellectual statement.

It’s about the nickname given to *Voyager*’s *Seven of Nine* by the Internet community. They call her “2 of 390.” Need I explain why? No, I am not some crazy feminist who is shocked by that reference to her big aluminum breasts. I understand that guys can’t get past her luxurious Borg figure, “cause anyways, resistance is futile, right?

I used to not be judgmental regarding my fellow *Trek*ies and didn’t want to be blinded by the cliché of “the nerdy pubescent pointed-ear loser,” but whoever came up with that nickname should volunteer on the next “away mission” out of his parents’ basement and get some real “on site” experience in the bra-popping business.

Next time you go to Walmart to buy your *Star Wars* models, why don’t you beam yourself into the women’s underwear department. You might find interesting information to put in your tri-corder and learn how to chart that unexplored

Continued on page 12



Our recent feature story “Sci-Fi’s Biggest Blunders” resulted in some of *Sci-Fi Universe*’s biggest floods of mail.

STAR TREK™
CUSTOMIZABLE CARD GAME™
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
1998

The Sky's The Limit

This November, Decipher will host the 2nd annual *Star Trek™* Customizable Card Game™ World Championships near US headquarters in Virginia. With only 40 seats available, competition to qualify will be formidable. Decipher is sponsoring 39 *Star Trek* CCG Regional and Open qualifying events, and one winner from each will receive an invitation to the finals. The fortieth seat goes to David Bowling, last year's World Champion.

This is the event of the year for all players of the *Star Trek™* Customizable Card Game™. Will you be there? The challenge is yours to face.

To find out how you can be part of Decipher's 1998 World Championship, visit the *Star Trek* CCG World Championship area of the Decipher web site at: <http://stworldchamps98.decipher.com> or contact Marcus Cerna (The Emissary) at 757-664-1155 or marcus@decipher.com.

OPEN QUALIFIERS

- July 5
Augusta 98
Columbus Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, OH
- August 9
Pleasanton
Pleasanton Center
Pleasanton, WI
- August 16
San Diego Comic-Con
San Diego Convention Center
San Diego, CA
- September 6
Orlando Con
Florida Apparel Mart
Atlanta, GA
- July 8 TBA
Euro Games
United Kingdom
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
Las Vegas, NV
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
Las Vegas, NV
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
Netherlands

REGIONAL QUALIFIERS

- July 23
Algonquin Doubletree Edgewater
Maple, NJ
- July 30
Aon And Uniform
Birmingham, AL
- June 6
Waverford West State School
Aldersford West, Queensland,
Australia
- June 14
Le Tig
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- June 20
Fantasy Shop
St. Charles, MO
- June 20
Mayhem Collectibles
Glen, IA
- June 20
Westral Ground
New York, NY
- June 27
Westral Ground
Mountain View, CA
- July 5
Star Hotel
Pensacola, Italy
- July 11
Rock Browser
Houston, TX
- July 11
Nikon Suites
rentwood, Tennessee
- July 11
Zachary
Arlington, VA
- July 11
Friedlander
Hampshire, NY
- July 11
Nightingale Mall Community Room
Ogden, UT
- July 13
Jugendherberge Esslingen
Esslingen, Germany
- July 18
Atlix
Aurora, CO
- July 19
Renton Park Community Centre
Vancouver (Burnaby), BC
- July 19
Sci Fi World
Concord, Ontario, Canada
- July 19
Bunthuis T'heraphos
Eindhoven, Netherlands
- July 25
Gofels Valley Community Center
Goleta, CA
- July 25
Michigan State University
Union Building
East Lansing, MI
- July 25
Source Games & Games
Falcon Heights, MN
- July 26
Mind Games City State
Melbourne, Australia
- August 5
Top Deck Games
Tulsa, OK
- August 8
Chamberlain Elementary School
South Burlington, VT
- August 22
Wizards Of The Coast
Game Center
Seattle, WA
- August 22
Games Galore
Raleigh, NC
- September 6
North Chicago City Building
North Chicago, IL
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
St. Louis, MO
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
London, England
- July 8 TBA
Location TBA
Malmö, Sweden

HAND SIGNED 8"x10" PHOTOS FROM TRULY UNIQUE COLLECTIBLES



G. Anderson - \$50



M. Bane - \$35



D. Boreman - \$40



A. Brooks - \$45



P. Brown - \$50



J. Bullock - \$35



L. Burton - \$40



N. Campbell - \$40



C. Christian - \$40



P. Gubling - \$50



W.S. Davis - \$35



H. Dawson - \$40



M. Dean - \$40



S. D. Field - \$10



T. Ford - \$45



C. Fisher - \$40



H. Ford (H) - \$15



H. Ford (H) - \$15



J. Finner - \$45



B.M. Geller - \$40



M. Gibson - \$110



A. Gomez - \$45



M. Hamill - \$40



L. Hamilton - \$45



T. Hubbard - \$50



L. Hennessee - \$40



N. Henshage - \$35



J. Love-Hend - \$35



D. Kirby - \$40



C. Lambert - \$45



L. Lasker - \$45



G. Lutz - \$35

All photos are in color and our inventory is consistently authenticated by Forensic Document Services & Authentic Autographs Unlimited.



G. McFadden - \$45



K. Mullen - \$80



L. Percy - \$75



J. O'Connell - \$35



A. Paul - \$45



O. Prowse - \$35



W. Shaber - \$75



A. Sherrstone - \$35



M. Sells - \$45



W. Smith - \$40



K. Soble - \$40



S. Spaulding - \$45



B. Spier - \$45



P. Stewart - \$75



S. Weaver - \$45



P. Wilson - \$35



K. Winard - \$45



A. W. 4 - \$125



Hercules & Xena - \$95



H. W. 4 - \$125



E. 4 - \$45



K. W. 4 - \$95



S. W. 4 - \$75



Star Trek - \$25



Star Trek TNG - \$25



Star Trek DGB - \$25



Star Trek Voyager - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25



Star Wars - \$25

Please Call

VISIT OUR WEBSITE WITH WEEKLY UP-DATES AT WWW.UNIQUECOLLECTIBLES.COM

Mail check or money order in U.S. funds to Truly Unique Collectibles, SF-04, P.O. Box 29, Sutter, NY 10001. 24 Hour Fax Line: (914) 357-4035.

Ordering Information: Shipping is \$5.95 (U.S.) & \$10.95 (Canada) + \$1.50 each additional item. Allow approximately 2 weeks for U.S. delivery. Call for international rates. NY residents add 7.25% sales tax. Checks are held for 7 days. We offer a 14 Day Return Policy. Autographed items are guaranteed authentic for life & include a certificate of authenticity. All prices are subject to change without notice.

We Accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover

CALL TOLL FREE 1-888-725-7414

Mon-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 10am-6pm (ET)

FOR A FREE COLOR CATALOG
CALL (914) 357-7411.





America's Largest
Annual Sci-Fi Event!
Over 300 Guests
Include:

Anthony Daniels

Star Wars'
C3PO

Ray Bradbury

Sci-Fi Grandmaster

Harlan Ellison

Author & Screenwriter

Jeff Conaway

Babylon 5's Zack Allen

Jonathan Harris

Lost in Space's Dr. Smith

Ray Harryhausen

Legendary F/X Wizard

Richard Hatch

Battlestar Galactica's Apollo

Patricia Tallman

Babylon 5's Lyta Alexander

Kevin Smith & Scott Mosier

Clerks and Chasing Amy

Trey Parker & Matt Stone

Creators of South Park



Sept. 3 - 6, 1998

Hyatt Regency Atlanta
& Atlanta Apparel Mart

For Info Call (770) 909-0115 or
Write: Box 47696, Atlanta, GA
30362-0696, or link to:
<http://www.dragoncon.org>

territory (where no Trekkie has gone before!).

You will discover that the number in a bra size refers to the circumference of the torso and the letter is the size of the cups. (Oh, dam, I disobeyed the prime directive and gave you information that will interfere with your development.) If Jeri Ryan was a "39" she'd be built like a Klingon warrior! Hell knows, I am a 36D and I would rip apart the Borg outfit if I was to be assimilated into their collective. So your beloved Borgette is (to a maximum) a 34C. Maybe one of you should end the perpetuation of bra size inaccuracy and ask her the truth next time she shows up at a convention. Beam me out!

"One of 180 L.Q."

Dear SFL:

I read your article "Sci-Fi's Biggest Blunders." Now, come on, it's called Science Fiction because it's FICTION. It's not supposed to be real. It's fantasy, not reality. And it most certainly is nothing to get bent out of shape about. In the words of MST3K, "Repeat to yourself, 'It's just a show, I should really just relax.'" Chill out, man!

Ashley Waldorf

Dear SFL:

I wanted to give Melissa Perenson extremely high praise for her interview of Robert Duncan McNeill. No one could have written it better—she covered everything I wanted to know about Robbie. Thanks for a great interview, Melissa. Maybe you should interview Roxann Dawson (Torres), too. I would love to see that in a future issue.

Karl Sullivan

Dear SFL:

Your article on Sci-Fi blunders was not only inaccurate, but also condescending, and insulting. For reference, I'll nitpick #3. I could nitpick them all, but I wouldn't waste my time typing.

Why do ships traveling at very high velocity appear to fly past each other very slowly? Good drama! That's why. It's more dramatic. Like the classic show down between Captain Roy Brown and the Red Baron. Two ships flying next to each other is more like a boxing match than a joust. Furthermore, no matter how fast crafts go, dogfighting will change very little. The aforementioned classic showdown bears very little difference to modern supersonic jets, and dogfighting in Star Trek and Star Wars occurs at sublight speeds. Why do space fighters bank? Air, or no air, to perform a starboard turn, it's more efficient to fire the port and port-ventral thrusters. The ship will bank, but the turn will be faster and more responsive. Think about it. It actually helps to expose the ventral thrusters into the turn and fire the ship back. Fragile humans do just fine when aided by a nifty life-support device called an inertial dampening system. Human pilots, in addition to good drama, increase vehicle response time, and allow the pilot to feel the movement of the craft, where piloting by remote would have you literally flying by the seat of your pants. Remote or pre-

programmed pilots are inefficient in a dogfight. You had no business being that condescending towards the entire Science Fiction industry, let alone to single out George Lucas.

If you wish to sell this material to viewers of Science Fiction, you should at least give the tasks to writers and proofreaders who are willing to make themselves familiar with the material. In nitpicking Science Fiction blunders I'll refer you to Phil Farnand's Nitpickers Guides. All the goofups exposed by someone who knows what he's talking about, and actually likes the shows.

A.J. Perry

Dear SFL:

I have been seeing and reading a heck of a lot of feature articles about The X-Files movie which in their own right have been interesting reading. That was, however, until I read Melissa J. Perenson's feature article "X Marks the Spotnitz," because then I realized I had indeed found the only definitive, number 1 feature article on The X-Files movie! Therefore, I want to express an extra, extra very special thanks not only to Melissa Perenson, but also to Sci-Fi Universe for being here for us sci-fi fans.

Al Munro

Dear Scott:

I saw the letter from Thomas Wilk in the current issue of Sci-Fi Universe. What surprises me most about this is that he couldn't have been reading the magazine very long, because I'd previously written for Sci-Fi Universe under the previous administration in the June 1996 issue. The different style used in the article was entirely my idea so as to take full advantage of the subject matter involved.

The other funny thing about his letter is that my piece on Banned From the Ranch is the first article ever written on that company, so you're not just covering the same ground as other magazines with that either.

The rest of his comments just baffle me.

James Van Hise

Dear SFL:

Amen, brother!

I never got all this fervor over Star Wars—and the remastered one (with new special effects that weren't so special), what was that all about?

Paul T. Riddell is absolutely correct in his little rant. Without the visuals, Star Wars is just a simple good vs. bad story. Sure there are some neat gadgets and pretty faces, but that's about it. In fact, the only good thing about the release of a visually-enhanced Star Wars was that it functioned as a good date movie for me. Neither of us was interested in the movie.

Thanks for that, anyway, Mr. Lucas.

Sincerely,
Frank Altomari

Write to us at Sci-Fi Universe, 21305 Sunset Rd., Reston, VA 20190. You can also reach us via our E-mail address at sovmmedia@erols.com.

DIRTY PAIR

MISSION 2 ACT 1

FLASH

The End of the
World is Coming,
and the Delivery
Girls are HERE!



LOVELY



ANGELS

musicland
"got just it"

sam goody
"got it"

SUNCOAST
MOTION PICTURE COMPANY

ADV
FILMS

Animation For a New Generation™

www.adufilms.com

e-mail: info@adufilms.com



RECORD TOWN
Music, Movies & More

SATURDAY
MATINEE
THE MOVIE STORE

© 2000 ADV FILMS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



The Truth is finally out there, no longer just on the Internet rumor mills, but instead actually in your theaters where you can judge for yourself how well *The X-Files* transformed from TV to film. David Duchovny and wife Téa Leoni (left) are seen arriving at the movie's premiere, as is the newly auburned Gillian Anderson (below). Elsewhere in X-news, composer Mark Snow and series creator Chris Carter (below left) took part in a soundtrack signing at a Virgin Records Megastore. Elsewhere in L.A., *The Profiler's* Ally Walker (above) donated her time to help out at a Pediatric Aids fundraiser.



PHOTO CREDITS

PAUL FENTON: David Duchovny, Tea Leoni, Ally Walker, Harrison Ford, Ivan Reitman.

SUE SCHNEIDER: Gillian Anderson, Tim Russ, Ron Perlman, Mark Snow, Chris Carter, Tracy Scoggins



Han Solo is proving that we should have considered *Star Wars* a romantic comedy all along. The man who brought him to life, Harrison Ford, was recently snapped with director Ivan Reitman (right) at the premiere of *Six Days, Seven Nights*. Tracy Scoggins (above) took time out from wrapping up the fifth and final season of *Babylon 5* by helping out at the Hollywood Charity Horse Show. Captured at the Saturn Awards were two talented actors who spend far too much time beneath makeup, so it was good to see *Star Trek: Voyager*'s Tim Russ (top sans pointy ears) and *Beauty and the Beast*'s Ron Perlman (above right) without the mane.





ACCEPT OF DISTANT WORLDS



The Book of the Dead
The Book of the Dead
\$19.95



The Secret Garden
The Secret Garden
\$19.95



Star Trek: The Motion Picture
Star Trek: The Motion Picture
\$19.95



Star Trek: The Motion Picture
Star Trek: The Motion Picture
\$19.95



The Enchanted Forest Chronicles
The Enchanted Forest Chronicles
\$19.95



Star Wars: The Force Awakens
Star Wars: The Force Awakens
\$19.95



Star Wars: The Force Awakens
Star Wars: The Force Awakens
\$19.95



Star Wars: The Force Awakens
Star Wars: The Force Awakens
\$19.95



Midnight Cafe
Midnight Cafe
\$19.95



The Essential Conan
The Essential Conan
\$19.95



The Essential Conan
The Essential Conan
\$19.95



The Essential Conan
The Essential Conan
\$19.95

7 REASONS TO JOIN NOW: 1. Joining is easy. Start with 5 books for \$1. Your fee (including shipping and handling) will come when membership is confirmed. 2. Your satisfaction is guaranteed. If you're not happy with your 5 books, return them within 10 days at our expense. Your membership will be cancelled, you'll owe nothing. 3. Save up to 60% off publishers' hardcover edition prices. Every book we offer is a high-quality, full-sized edition, sometimes offered in case to special prices. Also pick at least 4 more books at our regular low prices during your membership. Take up to 2 years! Then you may resign any time. 4. Extra bonus! Take a 6th book now for \$3.45 plus shipping and handling, and reduce your membership agreement to only 3 books. 5. A FREE Club Magazine comes to you up to 17 times a year—plus up to 2 special issues. Each reviews the Featured Book Selections plus dozens of alternate books. Some are exclusive Club editions you can't find anywhere else. 6. Ordering is risk free. Featured Book Selections are sent to you automatically. To cancel—or order other books—simply send your Member Reply Form by mail or contact our Web site by a marked date. Shipping and handling (plus sales tax, where applicable) is added to each order. You'll always have 10 days to decide if your Member Reply Form is late and unwanted books arrive, please return them at our expense. 7. Easy ordering. As a member, you can also order books via our Web site: www.sfbcc.com



The Mechanic

As a colorist for Wildstorm for the past few years, Joe Chiodo has raised the bar for using colors in comics. As a good-girl artist (defb, Chiodo has won acclaim around the world for his drop-dead gorgeous women. Now, Chiodo explores a new avenue—writer.

Set in the future, *The Mechanic* (right) tells the story of three characters from various eras who are nabbed by the requisite evil scientist for his diabolical genetic experiments. Upon arriving in the future, the trio are granted an odd assortment of powers, allowing them to live and forge their way in this odd new world. Told with a tongue-in-cheek style and a warm remembrance of classic sci-fi setups, not to mention the gorgeous fully painted artwork of Chiodo, *The Mechanic* is a treat for the eyes as well as the mind. **HOMAGE/WILDSTORM COMICS, \$5.95**



Star Wars Manga

Taking a bold step in their successful *Star Wars* comic line, Dark Horse Comics has recently kicked off a new series re-telling *A New Hope*. No big deal, right? Wrong. This time around, the story is entirely told in a manga format. Adapted, written, and drawn by Yamaki Hisao, *Star Wars Manga* is taken directly from Lucas' original script, and retells the classic story in a shot-by-shot manner, adding familiarity to the book despite its non-Western artistic style.

Told with all the trappings of traditional manga such as speed lines, panel-breaking sound effects, and characteristically big eyes on Princess Leia, *Star Wars Manga* takes a refreshing new look at the familiar story, infusing each character and situation with new energy. Definitely not to be missed by *Star Wars* or manga fan alike.

And to think you thought *Star Wars* didn't hold any excitement anymore.

FOUR ISSUES FROM DARK HORSE COMICS, \$9.95



Worth the Hunt: Zott!

Back in 1984, a young artist and writer named Scott McCloud entered the comic book market with a comic called *Zott!*. Back then, readers had an idea that the lovingly crafted, retro-looking sci-fi series that seemed to be an amalgam of Tintin and Asimov was something special. Fast forward nearly 15 years, during which McCloud has written *Understanding Comics*, the authoritative guide to how and why comics work, and it's easy to see that *Zott!* might be a classic.

Drawing from comic and science fiction greats, Zott! tells the tale of young Zach, a boy abandoned by his parents, who would one day grow up to save his alien world and the entire universe along with the help of the Earth girl, Jenny. Reading like traditional boys' adventure stories, Zott! is a fun ride, but at the same time has plenty of serious overtones along with mind-blowing fantastic elements that show McCloud to be one of today's best storytellers. A definite gem of comic storytelling packaged in a handsome volume. Hunt back enough, and you can most likely find its steep price tag at a discount.

TRADE PAPERBACKS FROM KITCHEN SINK PRESS.
VOL. 1 (ISSUES 1-10) \$34.95.



Sheva's War #1

Bringing his Iron Empires universe to the Helix imprint, writer/artist Christopher Moeller tells a compelling space opera with lush, fully painted artwork above. Centering on the trophy wife, Baroness Ahm Sheva, the five-issue miniseries tells the story of what happens when Sheva has to choose between a former mentor who's aligned himself with the monstrous Vaylen, or stand by her husband and adopted planet.

Could the decision of one woman be responsible for the fall of a planet? Told with intensity, *Sheva's War* is a solid, good read with gorgeous artwork from Moeller.

FIVE ISSUES FROM DC'S HELIX IMPRINT. \$2.95

Black Jack graphic novel

For those who've never read any of Osamu Tezuka's *Black Jack* series, this volume is a rare treat. Combining wonderful storytelling with art that is simplistic yet rich in subtext, *Black Jack* is one of Japan's national manga treasures.

In *Black Jack* (right and below, Tezuka (a.k.a. Japan's "God of comics" who also created *Astro Boy* and *Kimba the White Lion*) shared his love of medicine along with his incredible gift of storytelling. Set in a Japan of the near-future, *Black Jack* tells the story of an unlicensed surgeon

who charges exorbitant fees to perform operations on hopeless cases, always managing to pull victory from the jaws of defeat.

In *Black Jack*, Tezuka has taken the tricky terrain of hospital stories and transferred them to the comic page. It's a risk few others would take—sure *ER* works well on television, but



in comics? Tezuka pulls it off with ease. The initial volume contains classic *Black Jack* stories including "Where's the Doctor?" (the first *Black Jack* story), "The



Encounter" (showing Black Jack's lost love), and others. Chock full of drama and perplexing ethical questions, *Black Jack* is a treat from Japan that's not to be missed.

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS
GRAPHIC NOVEL SERIES;
\$15.95

Robotech: Wings of Gibraltar #1

Set in the *Macross* period, *Wings of Gibraltar* below right looks to answer a simple question: Where did all those awesome Robotech weapons come from? The miniseries kicks off when Rick Hunter and Max Sterling are sent to a top secret Robotech Defense Force (RDF) research and development facility for an inspection of the defensive forces. Much to every one's dismay the Zentradi have located the secret base and are poised for an attack with some serious firepower of their own. Suddenly, the two Robotech pilots have to defend the facility from the invading Zentradi forces and keep the secrets of the RDF out of their hands. But are the two up to the challenge?

TWO ISSUES FROM
ANTARCTIC PRESS. \$2.95





Terminator Special

They'd been quiet for so long. You'd think John Connor was safe, right?

Wrong. Looking to reinvigorate its Terminator comic license, Dark Horse Comics kicks off a return to the world of T-800s and Hunter-Killers with the *Terminator Special* (above right), written by Alan Grant, best known for his *Judge Dredd* and *Batman* work.

This time around, a pair of Terminators are sent to kill young John Connor as he hides out in the wastes of Death Valley. However, this time around events occur that force the Terminators to question their actions, pushing them to the brink of self-awareness and full human-esque consciousness, and even perhaps making them question their goal of killing a young boy. But before the Terminators can make that leap, they've got to wade through Satanist bikers, a renegade bounty hunter, and other denizens of the Valley. Writer Alan Grant delivers with this thought-provoking, yet action-filled tale of the boy who will one day change the future, and the robots who do anything to stop him.

Adding to the story is the interior art of Guy Davis, giving the book an ethereal feel that, oddly enough, matches the story, along with a dazzling and intricate cover by Geof Darrow.

ONE ISSUE FROM DARK HORSE COMICS. \$2.95



Marvel Comics 2: A-Next, Spider-Girl, J-2

Usually, when Marvel Comics creators spin off future realities, they're dark, depressing places such as Claremont and Byrne's classic Days of Future Past story line in the X-Men. This time out, however, writer and MC-2 universe manager Tom DeFalco has taken a more upbeat spin on the future of the Marvel universe, showing that the future doesn't have to be a depressing place.

Branching out from a story line in *What If?* #505, DeFalco has created a Marvel universe of the near future (above, center right), featuring the next generation of Marvel heroes

including Spider-Girl, the daughter of Peter and Mary Jane Parker, Zane Yama, a.k.a. J-2, who possesses the power of the Juggernaut, and A-Next, the Avengers of the future world. Told in a lighter, more upbeat style, each issue of the three new series will completely stand alone, perfect for both current or former Marvel aficionados looking to get back on the boat, or former Marvel fans looking to get their kids hooked on comics. If you thought comics couldn't be fun anymore, give this trio of titles a try. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

THREE ONGOING SERIES FROM MARVEL COMICS. \$1.99 EACH



StormWatch #10 & WildCATS/Aliens

For the past year, writer Warren Ellis has been using Wildstorm's *StormWatch* to not only redefine superheroes in the New World Order, but also to put forward some of the absolute coolest science fiction ideas currently seen in comics. Bacterial mantraps, cybernetic hookups, guns with human brains as guidance systems, parallel earths, nano-technology forests—all part and parcel for Ellis's tenure. With Ellis at the helm, *StormWatch* has been able to handle nearly every threat tossed its way. Until now.

In a rare intercompany crossover, the Aliens (whose exploits are usually published by Dark Horse Comics) are coming to Earth, and *StormWatch*'s Skywatch headquarters is the planet's first and last line of defense.

As the Alien force invades the satellite, *StormWatch*'s leader, Weatherman, erects the impenetrable Storm Door, sealing off *StormWatch* and Skywatch's staff of 500 from the rest of the world. Down on Earth, the WildCATS know what's going on, and use Vold's powers to teleport into the satellite. But what, and who, will they find when they arrive?

Rumor has it that *StormWatch* may not be around for any final bows when this battle is over. Be sure to check this crossover out for some of the most intelligent writing in comics today, along with great art provided by Brian Hitch and Chris Sprouse. You won't be disappointed.

WILDSTORM AND IMAGE COMICS.

STORMWATCH, \$2.50;

WILDCATS/AIENS, \$4.95.





Watch *Babylon 5*: Mondays-Fridays at 7pm (et)

Based on the Warner Bros. television series

created by J. Michael Straczynski



FOR FOUR YEARS,
IT'S BEEN

ESSENTIAL VIEWING.

NOW, IT'S ALSO

REQUIRED READING!



On sale in June

BABYLON 5: THIRDSPEACE
Peter David

The embattled Babylon 5 station makes a discovery in the depths of hyperspace that could affect the destiny of the civilized universe—a gigantic alien artifact, floating derelict. But attempting to penetrate the mammoth machine's mysteries brings terrifying consequences. Has Babylon 5 uncovered the threshold to a new age...or a gateway to hell? The thrilling novelization of the second full-length *Babylon 5* TV movie—by a *New York Times*—bestselling author, based on the screenplay by J. Michael Straczynski.

A Del Rey Paperback
0-345-42454-9/\$5.99/\$6.99 in Canada

**BABYLON 5:
POINT OF NO RETURN**
Jane Killick

The third in a series of comprehensive guides to each season's episodes! Featuring a fascinatingly detailed behind-the-scenes look at *Babylon 5*'s pioneering special effects, and a thrilling summation of events leading to the series' major turning point—the devastating Shadow War. Plus complete synopses of every third-season episode, including "Matters of Honor," "Ship of Tears," and the stunning finale, "Z'ha'dum," with an in-depth analysis of each.

A Del Rey Trade Paperback
0-345-42449-2/\$11.00/\$14.95 in Canada



On sale in July

Also available:

BABYLON 5: IN THE BEGINNING

Peter David

BABYLON 5: SIGNS AND PORTENTS

Jane Killick

BABYLON 5: THE COMING OF SHADOWS

Jane Killick

CREATING BABYLON 5

David Bassom

BABYLON 5 SECURITY MANUAL

Jim Mortimore with

Allan Adams and Roger Clark

Coming in September

BABYLON 5:

NO SURRENDER

NO RETREAT

Jane Killick

BABYLON 5:

DARK GENESIS

The Birth of the Psi Corps

J. Gregory Keyes

Based on an outline

by J. Michael Straczynski

On sale now



Stories That Define Imagination

A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group



BABYLON 5 TM & © 1993 Warner Bros.

White Wolf has taken its recently released science-fiction role-playing game, *Trinity* (formerly titled *Aeon*) and turned part of it into an exciting and challenging miniatures game called *Trinity: Battleground*, the first in an upcoming series of such games. The game is set on Kantze Lu Ge, the first of Earth's offworld colonies. Once a peaceful place, the colony has been discovered by the alien race known as the Abarants. Thousands of men, women, and children have been killed and the hopes of the

other colonists being saved are practically zilch until the Seventh Legion unexpectedly arrives to save the day. Players maneuver Abarant or Seventh Legion forces in a quest to either conquer the planet or drive the Abarants off it. The game includes a detailed rule-book, 20 high-quality plastic miniatures, and numerous other vehicles and props. Special 20-sided dice, and a bag, are included as well.

AVAILABLE IN AUGUST, \$59.95

The Star Trek Customizable Card Game

Decipher is best known for its high-profile collectible card games based upon the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* universes. The *Star Trek Customizable Card Game* has, until now, concentrated on the characters and events of *The Next Generation* television show and movies. This summer, though, the game takes a giant leap into territory no card game has gone before with the release of the *Deep Space Nine* expansion set. All of the well-known characters from the TV show are included, as

well as new gameplay concepts such as the Space Station, Bajoran Wormhole, and Gamma Quadrant. Because of the complexity of the new additions, the expansion set contains no less than 260 cards, double the size of most Decipher expansions.

AVAILABLE NOW, \$2.50 FOR 9-CARD BOOSTER PACKS.

Star Trek: The Next Generation

Star Trek fans can rejoice. They finally have a role-playing game based on their favorite television show. Last Unicorn Games' *Star Trek: The Next Generation* brings the world of *Star Trek* to life for the first time as an RPG. Players can select from any of the major races, including Vulcan, Klingon, and Cardassian. Those selecting Federation races can select skills learned at Starfleet Academy as part of their characters' back-



Trinity goes miniature, thanks to *Trinity: Battleground*, the first in White Wolf's expansion of the gaming sensation.



NEW RELEASES FROM URBAN VISION ENTERTAINMENT

TEKKAMAN- BLADE II

STAGE 1: The New Generation



Run Time: 60 Minutes

also available from Urban Vision:



AVAILABLE
07.28.98

Ten years have passed since the original series (Tekkaman to fans of the U.S. TV series) as a new breed of Tekkaman face off against their powerful enemy - Radham. Our heroes must struggle to overcome the shadows of their past and scramble to rebuild their team, as they prepare to battle against extreme odds with the fate of humanity at stake. Tekkaman Blade II is rife with conflict, both internal and external, and soon to become a classic.

\$19.95
S.T.P.

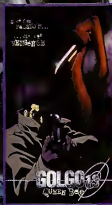
DVS ENGLISH DUBBED
0 0 1 0 2 4

\$29.95
S.T.P.

DVS ENGLISH SUBTITLED
0 0 1 0 2 5

Not rated. Contains some violence and brief nudity. Parental discretion advised.

Coming in August:



<http://www.urban-vision.com>

also coming: Tekkaman Blade II: Stage 3

GAMES



Decipher expands their *Star Trek* universe to include *Deep Space Nine* (left), and *South Peak* helps you visit the *Dark Side of the Moon* (right).

ground. Character-generation is simple and numerous "templates" exist for different races, Academy training, and tours of duty, all of which grant characters certain predetermined skill sets depending upon which career path they have chosen.

Great care has been taken in order to bring the world of *The Next Generation* to life, with detailed information provided about the various weapons and starships available in the game. An entire chapter is given over to starship combat, including the various maneuvers—even the famed "Picard Maneuver." One of the more amusing items is a mix-and-match technobabble chart, thus allowing characters and narrators to technospeak with the best of them. Aliens are explained as well, even races that have been seen in only an episode or two, such as the warlike Nausicans, the paired Bynars, and the omnipotent Q Continuum. *Stoey* notes are supplied to enable Narrators to include any of these races into campaigns.

Narrators are given a great deal of help, with large sections of the system explaining



how to tell interesting stories, and how to create social aspects of alien cultures that players may come across. No stone is left unturned, with information supplied for creatures and beasts, too, and ways to incorporate them into stories. Last Unicorn's plans for this game system includes books that explore the *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager* and original series worlds. If you've ever wanted to captain your own starship, this is your chance. **Make it so!**

AVAILABLE NOW, \$30.

Dark Side of the Moon

South Peak's new computer game, *Dark Side of the Moon*, begins simply. Your uncle has left you everything he owns, including his mining claim on Luna Crysta. All you have to do is go there and establish title to the claim. Unfortunately, things are never as simple as they seem. If the video he recorded before he died can be trusted, his death may be connected to a rich find. That would certainly explain why everybody, from the young and beautiful blackjack dealer to the mining company's slimy CEO to your own sister, is taking a special interest in your



A CELEBRATION FOR FANS OF B5 AND SCI-FI
OCTOBER 16-18 1998 FAIRPLEX POMONA LA CA USA



VOICE OF THE RESISTANCE



**V
O
R**



Bruce Boxleitner, Michael O'Hare, Mira Furlan, Claudia Christian, Jerry Doyle,
Peter Jurasik, Andreas Katsulas, Richard Biggs, Patricia Tallman, Bill Mumy,
Stephen Furst, Jason Carter, Tracy Scoggins, Jeff Conaway, Walter Koenig,
Ed Wasser, Robin Atkin Downes, Tim Choate, Denise Gentile,
Wayne Alexander, Wortham Krimmer, Josh Cox, Jeffrey Willerth,
Johnny Sekka, Blair Baron, Marie Marshall, Damian London, John Vulich,
David Eagle, Larry DiTillio, Kim Holly, Fionagh Cush, Greg Funk

HOST TO THE BABYLON 5 CCG WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sponsored By



For tickets booking form send a SASE to
VOR 1147 East Broadway #35 Glendale, LA,
CA, 91205, USA visit our website at
<http://members.aol.com/vorcon1>
email vorcon1@aol.com

VOR is not affiliated with or sanctioned by Warner Bros., TNT, or Babylonian Productions.
Images copyright Warner Bros., TNT used herein for publicity purposes only.
We can not guarantee that all attendees will receive autographs.
Guests appear subject to their professional work commitments.



THE EXHIBITION

GAMES



ABOVE: At last, a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* RPG. RIGHT: The *Babylon 5* Collectible Card Game goes to war.

dealings on Luna Crysta. These and other characters interact with the player through an easy-to-understand and easy-to-use interface. The computer-generated sets are stunning and every area can be seen in full 360-degree

panoramic view. This is a great game for those who like well-crafted plots, interesting and well-acted characters, and healthy doses of murder, intrigue and mystery.

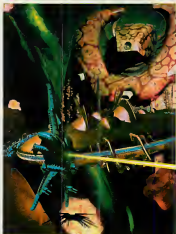
AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER FOR WINDOWS
\$95, 6 CDs, \$49.9

The Great War

"It was the time of The Great War" is a phrase that has special significance for any fan of *Babylon 5*. Following on the heels of *The Shadows* expansion set comes *The Great War* expansion set for the *Babylon 5* Collectible Card Game from Eternity. The expansion adds two entirely new starter decks to the popular game, *Non-Aligned Worlds* and *Home Factions*. While the former introduces races such as the Drazi to the game, it is *Home Factions* which does the most for gameplay, as players will be able to work from the point of view of one of the Centari emperors or even that of President Clark himself. As would be expected there is a great deal of added depth to fleet combat, with the introduction of entire Vorlon and Shadow fleets and the addition of cards such

as "Vorlon Planet Killek." Other cards, like "Sheridan Reborn" and "G'Kar Enlightened," will reflect changes to major characters. *The Great War* is sure to become popular with new and old players of this game alike.

AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER, IN BOOSTER PACKS (\$2.49) AND STARTER DECKS (\$8.95)



The Crow
1:8 sc vinyl kit
\$ 60.00



Metal Painted Disc
\$100.00



Abby Cadabara



Leon
1:8 sc resin kit



SPIDEY VS THE LEARD
1:8 sc resin kit
\$150.00



Cynthia
1:8 sc resin kit

www.garagekit.com
Model kits from around the Globe.



Warrior Series
PIN
\$45.00 vinyl



PELOQUIN
1:8 sc resin kit
\$ 100.00

Character Shop

www.garagekit.com 1 Sylvan St., Peabody, Mass. 01960
978-531-4003 or 978-531-3545 Fax



Warrior Series
C. BRY
\$45.00 vinyl

Special MONSTER MODELSET 10TH ANNIVERSARY HELLMETER REUNION PLASQUE \$35.00



www.garagekit.com

MechCommander

FASA's popular *Battletech* role-playing game continues its assault on home computers this summer with the release of *MechCommander*, an action/strategy game from MicroPose. Although there are numerous similar games on the market, *MechCommander* has the advantage of being set in a universe with a rich 1,000-year history, a history that is already familiar to fans of the *Battletech* game and novels. In *MechCommander*, players command



mander an exciting game, since players quickly identify with the 30 actors and actresses who portray the various Mechwarriors.

AVAILABLE NOW, FOR WINDOWS '95 AND '98 SYSTEMS, \$64.99

Traveller

Since its release in the summer of 1977, *Traveller* has been one of the best-known science fiction role-playing games. Over 20 years and several editions later, *Traveller* has found a new home at Steve Jackson Games. *GURPS Traveller* contains everything the original *Traveller* had: a rich background story with a history spanning over 1,000 years; the ability for players to become politicians, starship pilots, diplomats, criminals; political intrigues, trading schemes, wars, mercenary raids. *Traveller* has it all.

One of the things that *GURPS Traveller* adds is an alternate history in which the

Rebellion, an older addition to the original game, did not happen. In this new universe, the 43rd Emperor was not assassinated, thus preventing an empire-wide civil war from taking place. There's plenty to keep adventurers busy in the *Traveller* world, though, and this game should be welcomed by old and new *Traveller* fans alike.

AVAILABLE NOW, \$27.95



a platoon of up to 12 MechWarriors in a mission-driven game, the goal of which is to free Port Arthur from Smoke Jaguar Clan domination. Each Mech contains 100,000 frames of animation, thus allowing for amazingly smooth and varied motion. The mix of computer animation and live-action clips makes *MechCom-*



Danger Will Robinson! New Stamps Create Galactic Stamp-ede!

Warning! Warning! These Limited Edition Lost in Space stamps are red-hot

Owings Mills, Maryland — Science fiction fans and collectors are suddenly scrambling to obtain a new Limited Edition 9 Stamp set that has been issued by the Togokise Republic to commemorate New Line Cinema's latest blockbuster, *Lost in Space*. The film is based on one of the most popular television shows of the 1960s.

"Collector demand for these stamps has been unbelievable," stated John Van Emden of ICS, distributor of the stamps. "*Lost in Space* is one of the most recognizable and popular TV shows of all time. Who can forget 'Danger, Will Robinson?' Collectors know that this is their first and only opportunity to get actual government issued Legal Tender stamps that are both beautiful and rare. In fact, we're nearly sold out."

Collectors are already predicting first in the very near future these *Lost in Space* stamps will be far more sought after and desirable than the U.S. Elvis stamp, the most popular commemorative issue of all time.

Visit us at www.icscollectibles.com

"Over 500 million Elvis stamps have been released. When you compare that to these *Lost in Space* stamps, which are issued in a strictly Limited Edition of just thousands worldwide, you can see the irresistible appeal that these stamps have for collectors," added Van Emden.

Each of the nine colorful stamps features a portrait of an original cast member. Each stamp is about four times the size of a regular U.S. postage stamp. They're legal for postage in the Togokise Republic and are recognized by every postal authority around the world.

Gotta have 'em? They are available for a short time at \$9.95 (plus \$3 p&h) for the complete set of nine colorful stamps, accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity and the free pocket guide, "99 Little Known Facts About *Lost in Space*." The most you can buy is six sets. Send your check or money order to: ICS, 3600 Chondall Lane, Suite 100XVSP, Owings Mills, MD 21117. To order by credit card, call toll free 1-800-805-0551.

Lost in Space

Collectors race to get colorful new stamps honoring *Lost in Space*.



ANOTHER CURIOUS MIX of old and new with the old being by far the more interesting releases. The new films are dark, sullen and nihilistic. The old films are flat out, simple-minded fun. I know which ones I'd choose.

Dark City (1998)

The sci-fi community had high hopes for this dank and damed-near impenetrable mindbender. The premise is fascinating, and the trailers looked terrific. A slick and seductive shadow-swathed city controlled by powers beyond our comprehension—sounds like the most promising hybrid of fantasy and film noir to come along since *Blade Runner*. The plot line is less than original, resembling in many ways the classic *Outer Limits* episode "Feasibility Study," wherein several square miles of a city is hoisted into space so that a dying alien race, sampling several planets in their search for a new home, can evaluate Earth's livability. The episode was remade as part of the new *Outer Limits* series and held up very nicely with few changes made to its basic theme.

Clearly, the potential for an intriguing movie is there. But director Alex Proyas, whose dark vision brought a suffocating angst to *The Crow*, exploits handsome visuals to the detriment of his story. The garbled narrative is so choked with chilling shadows and dystopic sets that it clouds any charisma the cast might exert and makes empathy with their plight nearly impossible. The heavy-handed attempts to convey a brooding nihilism backfire and the film comes dangerously close to resembling a parody of what it wants to be.

Clearly, the offbeat premise drew a handful of capable actors to the project, but so minutes in, even they seem bored. The terminally crowsy William Hurt goes boldly wigless as a taciturn gumshoe. Jennifer Connelly, a capable actress who just can't seem to land the right role, seems likewise distracted. Rupert Sewell as the beleaguered hero seems an odd choice for the part, as he never conveys anything close to the fear one would expect of someone in his situation. Most distracting of all is Kiefer Sutherland as the kooky, quirky scientist who falls in league with the manipulative aliens that control the titular city. Gasping and hiccuping every line in an effort to make his role showy, he comes off merely annoying.

The visuals, of course, are stunning. The spectacle of twisted skyscrapers growing like weeds in the rain-slick night is a show stopper. But as we simply don't care about the fate of the characters at risk, what emerges is just a glorious advertisement for the wonders of computer animation.

The look of the aliens is another critical mis-calculation. Done up in dark overcoats and white pancake makeup, the bald and cadaverous bad guys look like nothing so much as a somnambulant army of Uncle Festers.

The notion of mixing *Blade Runner* and Kafka must have looked good on paper to someone, but the predicament of our frenzied protagonist, who awakens to a sinister world he cannot fathom, to whom every shred of explanation is denied, is more wearisome than harrowing. The script tries so hard to be mysterious and obscure that it succeeds only in being boring.

Dark City's creepy visuals bring a new meaning to film noir, but at its heart the film is nothing to *Crow* about.



FALLEN (1998)

Again, an interesting premise, not entirely original, suffers from muddled execution. Satan passing easily from one host body to another via the slightest touch is a loaded dramatic proposition. But in the case of *Fallen*, the notion is stretched a tad too thin, and audience patience is exhausted long before the final payoff. Beginning in time-tested film noir fashion—with a voiceover narration courtesy of our already-dead hero—the plot unravels initially like a detective yarn before losing its way, only playing out the potential of the satanic cat-and-mouse game after our interest has waned.

Denzel Washington is one of contemporary cinema's more charismatic leading men. His wily take on the veteran urban homicide detective is welcome, and his decision to star in an offbeat fantasy film with a relatively modest budget—not an effects-driven sci-fi blowout—is remarkable. Although he brings much-needed credibility to the film, his efforts are unfortunately wasted.

Everybody's drinking buddy John Goodman is happily cast as a gregarious cop who is staidly in Denzel's corner when the going gets rough. He's another likable character actor

who can't seem to steer clear of thankless roles as the hero's best pal or comic vehicles about big, dumb slob. Here, as in the majority of his roles, his performance teeters precariously between comic relief and solid dramatics to the detriment of both.



As a veteran urban homicide detective, Denzel Washington shows that his talent hasn't fallen.

THE BEACH GIRLS AND THE MONSTER (1964)

This one turned up time and again on late-night TV throughout the sixties under the decidedly more mundane title *Monster From the Surf*. For schlock buffs bent on completing their collection of all things camp, this film couldn't have more to recommend it.

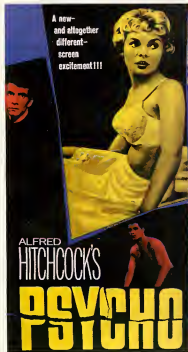
Jon Hall, the movie's director and star, was once Universal Studio's pre-eminent matinee idol. Breezing through a series of 1940s, South Sea adventure films, usually teamed with sultry Maria Montez, Hall parlayed his reputation as a Polynesian playboy into bona fide stardom. By the 1950s, he'd aged gracefully into the role of *Ramar of the Jungle*, popular TV and comic book hero.

By 1964, Hall saw the writing on the drive-in wall, and set out to make a teen exploitation film loaded with marketable themes: Blüinis, go-go dancers, fast cars, monsters and a soundtrack peppered with twangy guitars. In addition, we've subjected to rams of documentary surf footage. Hall contracted no less than Frank Sinatra Jr. to compose the film's original songs, the most annoying of which is sung by a puppet.

The throwaway plot is hardly worth summarizing: To terrify the teens that threaten to lure his scientist son into a life of debauchery, Hall dons a shredded, rubbery suit with a pointy head and stalks the sands to strangle the occasional sun bunny. All in all, this is my idea of top-notch, fun-filled video entertainment.

Jason and the Argonauts (1963)

The one film on the list that the whole family can truly enjoy, this kaleidoscopic look at classic mythology is appealing on a great many levels. Color, heroics, maidens, and monsters are all in evidence, as well as a likable cast that modern audiences will most likely find obscure. But the film's true star is animation whiz Ray Harryhausen, or more properly, the myriad marvellous creatures he brings to life.



PSYCHO (1960)

What's left to say about *Psycho*? Only that the classic Hitchcock shocker, which all smart people have already seen, is being re-released in a special, wide-screen DVD collector's edition. Along with slick new packaging and Dolby sound, the release is packed with extras that discriminating videophiles won't want to miss. (If you're not familiar with this seminal film, you owe it to yourself to screen the movie that irrevocably altered the course of all modern horror.)

The most important inclusion is *The Making of Psycho*, a documentary that features interviews with the likes of the director's daughter, Patricia, star Janet Leigh, screenwriter Joseph Stefano, assistant director Hilton A. Green, Hitchcock's personal assistant Peggy Robertson, author Clive Barker, and editor Paul Hirsch.

In addition, the documentary includes the unveiling of a censored scene, newsreel footage, production photos, theatrical trailers, and interestingly, the classic shower scene shown with and without musical accompaniment.

VIDEOS



Sword-fighting skeletons and rampaging stone giants, this crisp collector's edition reveals them to a new generation in all their stop-motion splendor. Even the most hardened CGI junkies, spoiled by Jurassic Park's digital denizens, will have to concede that Harryhausen, who fathered such fantasy favorites as the Ymir of 20,000,000 Miles to Earth and the sporty spaceships of *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, worked miracles with a few pounds of clay, wire, and latex.

Godzilla Galore

Godzilla, King of the Monsters
Godzilla vs. Mothra
Godzilla's Revenge
Monster Zero

Anyone who was even mildly entertained by the colossal impostor rampaging through theaters this summer might as well stop reading right now. We're talking about the real Godzilla here. Not that I'm a Toho purist by any means. It's just difficult to understand why producers retained the famous name but none of the charm of these original Japanese shockers.

**The CIA is after him...
 The KGB thinks they're
 controlling him...**

**The problem is...
 there are two of him!**

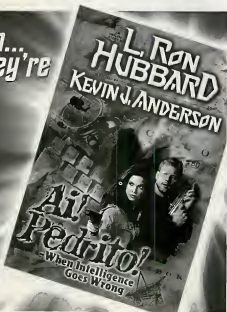
New York Times best-selling authors
 L. Ron Hubbard (*Battlefield Earth*,
Mission Earth) and Kevin J. Anderson
 (*X-Files*, *Star Wars*) take you on an
 unpredictable and explosive
 adventure—through an intriguing
 world of spies and double
 agents, lovers and enemies.

Buy Your Copy Today!

\$25.00 wherever hardcovers are sold.
 Also available in audio.

Bridge Publications, Inc.

© 1998 BPL All Rights Reserved.



Here's the Big G in his original fire-spittin', pagoda-stompin' glory, dorsals glowing in anger, skidding the ground on his titanic tail. If ever a star was made for the wide screen, Godzilla is it, and these titles are debuting with their original Toho scope integrity intact.

The scaly symbol of Japanese terror had a great run, from his original, black and white, Tokyo-crushing foray in 1954 (also available in a non-Americanized, Raymond Burr-less edition) to the forgettable shenanigans of *Mecha-Godzilla*, a misguided attempt to—well, who knows what they were trying to do with that one?

As a bonus, this summer will see the video release of a rarely screened Japanese fright film, *Gappa, the Triphibian Monster*. Toho completists, some unable to view the film for decades, rejoice at the imminent debut, and wait anxiously to see whether or not the film lives up to its reputation.

Missile to the Moon (1959)

The folks at Englewood Entertainment, God bless 'em, are clearly dedicated to preserving vintage sci-fi, releasing an average of five titles per month. Some are good, some are great, some are undeniably bad. All are historically significant in the eyes of grateful genre purists.

Frankenstein's Daughter, from director Richard Cunha, was part of a recent batch of Englewood releases. And now the film with which it shared its drive-in double bill is available as well. *Missile to the Moon* has it all—sex, rockets, and rowdy teens, walking rock

men and giant spiders. You gotta love it. The film's genesis is nearly as interesting. It seems that Astor Pictures, the original distributors, insisted that Cunha remake the shameless schlock classic *Cat-Women of the Moon*. Why is anyone's guess. Did they feel they hadn't quite nailed it the first time around? Even Cunha was puzzled, but doggedly proceeded to craft a film as laughably cheap as it is endearing. Obviously, the intent was to exploit the pulchritude of a cavoring chorus line of

Moon chicks, and there's no denying that Cunha succeeded in this respect.

Richard Travis, one-time Warner Bros. contract player, leads the expedition, with likable B-movie heroine Cathy Downs (*Phantom From 30,000 Leagues*, *She Creature*) on his arm. Nina Bara of TV's *Space Patrol* is a lustful, mind-controlling Moon maiden, and Tommy Cooke and Gary Clarke, veterans of several notable B-honor and JD films, chew up the scenery as delinquent stowaways.



- A. Xena 12 Poseable Action Figure Special Price \$19.99
- B. Xena Goblet \$17.95
- C. Xena Bitter Suite Cd \$16.98
- D. Xena Journal w/Bookmark \$7.98
- E. Xena Chakram Mirror \$24.95
- F. Xena Color 8"x10" Photos \$5.00 Each Many Styles Available
- G. Xena Stance T-Shirt w/Logo on Back \$16.00 Sm., Med., Large, X-Large Call For Full Catalog With Hundreds Of Xena Rems!

FEDERATION COMICS

1 Sylvan St.
Peabody, Ma 01960

V. (978)531-1538 - 24 Hour Fax: (978)531-4938
Email: SCIFI@fedcomix.com

Visit Us on the Web at: www.fedcomix.com

All prices subject to change without notice and subject to availability
MA residents must add 5% sales tax
Mastercard, Visa, Amex, Discover, Money Orders accepted.

THE X-FILES



X-Files Action Figures
Scully \$11.99
Mulder \$11.99
More Figures Coming Soon!

- Official X-Files Movie Magazine \$5.99
- Official X-Files Movie Comic Adaption \$5.95
- Official X-Files Movie Trading Card Set \$19.99

We Also Have Great Stuff From:



Hercules,
Sailor Moon,
Star Wars,
Star Trek,
And More!!



- A. Buffy TVS Slayer T-Shirt \$16.00
 - B. Buffy TVS Cast T-Shirt \$16.00
 - C. Buffy TVS Bite Me T-Shirt \$16.00
 - D. Buffy TVS Moon T-Shirt \$16.00
- All T-Shirts Available in Med., Large, X-Large
Coming Soon Buffy TVS Comics, Cards, Toys, & Much More!!

Shipping & Handling \$5.00 - \$6.99 = \$12.00
\$6.00 - \$24.99 = \$4.50 \$100.00 + = Free Shipping
\$28.00 - \$46.99 = \$5.50 *Continental U.S. Only
\$48.00 - \$64.99 = \$7.50 International Orders Call
\$69.99 - \$84.99 = \$9.50 Per Shipping



Out of the Dark

Robert W. Chambers published nearly 100 novels between 1894 and 1933, many of which were quite popular. All but a handful are forgotten today, rightfully disregarded as workmanlike page-fillers pandering to the prevailing fads. Were it not for a single collection of short fiction, *The King in Yellow*, Chambers would have vanished from the literary landscape. That single, rather uneven collection established Chambers as a noteworthy creative, praised by some critics as the most significant author of weird fiction between Poe and the moderns.

Out of the Dark, a new hardcover volume from Ash-Tree Press, collects most of the macabre tales from *The King in Yellow*, along with the better entries from two obscure anthologies, *The Maker of Moons* and *The Mystery of Choice*. The absence of "The Repairer of Reputations," arguably the best story from *The*

King in Yellow, is somewhat puzzling, but editor Hugh Lamb has chosen the rest of the collection well. The stories here sometimes demonstrate Chambers' predilection for dwelling on dreary social detail and stiff romances. Yet they also offer up some exceptional moments of supernatural terror, as in the description of the monstrous Xln, with its army of urchin-like satellites, blind and mouthless, feeling the ground around the hulking creature like living fingers severed from a hand.

Limited to a print run of a meager 500 copies, *Out of the Dark* is worthy of



but lesser work; by the turn of the century, Chambers' dedication to trends had estranged him from the dark muse that inspired such timeless and disturbing tales as "The Yellow Sign."

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, EDITED BY HUGH LAMB, ASH-TREE PRESS, HARDCOVER, \$38.50



inclusion in your library of weird fiction. Ash-Tree has promised a second volume of Chambers, pulling together his best short fiction from the post-1900 period. It will be an entertaining,

Kingdom Come

The heart of any successful fantasy story—whether in the format of a comic book, film or, in this case, a novel—is that elusive quality known as "sense of wonder." It's the ability to revive the audience's childlike amazement with the world, to make them believe that magic happens, that the cynical and the mundane don't form reality's borders. Sometimes this quality is achieved by adept writing. Sometimes an author's affection for a particular subject shines through. In the case of *Kingdom Come*, both these things lend the novel a wonderful breathlessness.

Based upon the comic book mini-series scripted by Mark Waid and painted by Alex Ross, *Kingdom Come* suggests an alternative future history of the DC Universe. In the early part of the 21st century, such old guard heroes as Superman and Wonder Woman have

stepped out of the limelight. In their stead, young heroes without the control or compassion of the previous generation have turned the world into one big arena for their "rumbles." Inevitably, these senseless battles force the planet to the brink of nuclear Armageddon—then push it over.

Maggin's novelization is an improvement upon the very entertaining source comics. He has more space to flesh out the familiar characters and to detail some of the newly created heroes. Maggin proves particularly skillful at crafting vignettes that breathe life into DC's warhorses. We glimpse the Flash's super-fast patrol of Keystone City, and eavesdrop on millionaire Bruce Wayne as he watches *Civilian Kane*, a film he views as a comedy because of its message about the limiting nature of wealth. Maggin's long stint as the principal writer for Superman serves him well here, too. He approaches the book's central character with respect and a clear understanding of what makes the Man of Steel an effective icon. At its best moments, *Kingdom Come* will remind you why these heroes have made such an impact on pop culture for the past 60 years.

By ELLIOT S. MAGGIN, WARNER ASPECT, HARDCOVER, \$20.00

A Scientific Romance

On New Year's Eve, 1999, archaeologist David Lambert half-jokingly follows up on a newly discovered letter written by H.G. Wells and waits in an abandoned London flat. There, as the letter promised, appears the actual model for the time machine Wells wrote about in his novel.

What follows is an impressive, carefully mod-

ulated homage to the scientific romances of Wells and such early SF disaster novels as Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*. Lambert uses the time machine, of course, journeying to the year 2500 A.D. The England he discovers in that distant time is a tropical ruin. To determine the origins of this collapse, he must use all his skills as an archaeologist.

As with the earlier works it echoes, Wright's novel is both a prophecy of possible "things to come" and an insightful critique of current culture. The choice of the seemingly outmoded scientific romance template is clever, drawing a subtle connection between the 1990s and the 1890s, when the form was first in vogue. The parallel is developed skillfully throughout the narrative, as well, as Lambert muses on the destructive nature of capitalism and consumerism run amok, with robber barons and faceless multinationals exchanging the same black hat. There's more to the story than that, much more. Lambert's failed relationships with friends and lovers haunt him across the centuries. The exploration of the abandoned, ravaged England also succeeds marvelously as an adventure story, related skillfully as a series of journal entries.

Though the marketing of *A Scientific Romance* downplays its SF identity, this is clearly a science fiction novel, one that displays quite vividly the genre's formidable potential.

By DONALD WRIGHT, PICADOR, HARDCOVER, \$23.00

The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of

When it comes to science fiction, Thomas M. Disch knows of what he speaks. In *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*, he serves up a blunt, informative chat about the much-maligned science fiction genre. The book encompasses everything from L. Ron Hubbard and the founding of Scientology to the political ramifications of conservative "School of Heinlein" military SF. The chapters are focused, insightful, and rarely shy away from naming names and poking people in the eye when necessary. Only occasionally does this slip into personal axe-grinding, and Disch is open about which skirmishes he's involved with firsthand (as in his denunciation of Ursula Le Guin's feminist agenda in choosing stories for the prestigious Norton Anthology of SF).

In far fewer instances does Disch drop a sweeping and unsupported generalization, but there are enough of them to bear comment. Take Disch's generic condemnation of sword & sorcery fantasy. The dismissal is complete and achieved with the sort of offhand comment far too typical in the ghettos of genre fiction, where authors are quick to defend their own category by disparaging another. Of course writers who have published sword & sorcery (like myself) have been known to blast romance novels as a group, so the sin is a common enough one, if all the more insidious for its prevalence.

As a whole, the book offers a thoughtful and

revealing look at the SF publishing industry and its impact upon American culture. And the impact is profound. As Disch points out so wisely, Americans are "a nation of liars" and we like our lies bold and imaginative and inspiring. SF is just the genre to present those falsehoods in a really entertaining fashion.

By THOMAS M. DISCH, FREE PRESS, HARDCOVER, \$25.00



Seal Of Approval

Much of the critical history of comic books and the comics industry has been published by the fan press, by authors who approach the subject primarily as devotees of comics. *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code* comes at the subject from the other side, with an author from academia who isn't so much interested in comics as in their history as media artifact.

Nyberg discusses 1950's state and federal hearings into the connection of comics to juvenile delinquency, and the evolution of the resulting Comics Code. She also offers up an unprecedented defense of Dr. Fredric Wertham,

the crusading psychologist whose infamous screed against comics, *Seduction of the Innocent*, helped to convince Eisenhower-era parents and concerned citizens that comics were purposeful assassins of youthful innocence. At times, Nyberg seems to understate the unsupportable logic and sensational nature of Wertham's published attacks on comics, but her connection of his opposition to comics to his larger body of work is insightful and, on

the whole, more balanced than fanish depictions of Wertham as an unforgotten crackpot. Comics fans will be interested in the actual Comics Code, which is reproduced in its various incarnations. Potential scholars will find the book's reference list invaluable for material published before 1990.

In the end, Nyberg argues convincingly that the Comics Code is both a helpful shield against further censorship and a hindrance to those who want to promote comics as a legitimate art form. The conflict reflects clashes within the industry itself, between the accountants and the artists. And it remains to be seen who will triumph—those who want the business to thrive regardless of artistic concerns and those who want the medium to include more than costumed characters sowing mayhem and pounding each other unconscious.

By AMY KISTE NYBERG, UNIVERSITY PRESS OF MISSISSIPPI, TRADE PAPERBACK, \$18.00

Pulp Culture

Pulp Culture sets itself a substantial goal—to present the most comprehensive compilation of art from the pulps ever published—and achieves it with style. Authors Robinson and Davidson present over two hundred pages of strikingly reproduced covers that feature everything from the relatively familiar images of the Shadow and the other masked denizens of the hero pulps, to the covers of romance and sports magazines, to the curious yet

inspired art from such oddities as *Zeppelin Stories* and *Popular Engineering Stories*. The book does a fine job encompassing the broad spectrum of pulps available in the form's heyday. There's relatively little text, but a plethora of facts and snippets of informative criticism. Pulp Culture is certain to become a standard reference for anyone interested in the pulps and the dynamic, exciting artwork that helped them fly off the newsstand.

By FRANK M. ROBINSON AND LAWRENCE DAVIDSON, COLLECTORS PRESS, HARDCOVER, \$39.95

James Lowder is currently at work on his sixth novel, *Spectre of the Black Rose*, due for release in early 1999.

AVENGER

Ralph Fiennes and Uma Thurman take on Sean Connery



ASSEMBLE

as Great Britain's Earth-saving dynamic duo.



In 1962, Americans were watching TV shows like *Bonanza*, *Guns, Smoke, and Wagon Train*, while in England we were watching *The 1962 World Cup*, *Danger Man*, its pseudo-spin-off *Secret Agent*, and our perennial favorite *The Avengers*. It's 36 years later and now both England and America are watching *The 1998 World Cup* and the much-awaited *Avengers Film*, which the creators hope will, ahem, Steed-factly have new aPeel. Similar to soccer's popularity in America, it has taken a while to get the film off the ground.

"It took us a long time to get a script," producer Jerry Weintraub's says in his

By Dr. Craig Reid



Below: (L to R) Iron Man, Nick Fury, and the new Avengers. LEFT: Filming the opening of *Iron Man 2*. ABOVE: Tony Stark and Fiennes at rest. RIGHT: Iron Man and the new Avengers.

andpaper voice. "[There were] a lot of scripts and I kept throwing them out. None had the quirkiness of the show."

David Fincher (Seven) then tackled the script, which he envisioned as "cruel and violent, with Charles Dance as Steed," and three years ago Nicholas Meyer (*Six*, *Tek II* and *IV*) signed to direct a script written by Don MacPherson.

Frown disappearing, Weintraub shares, "I

wanted to keep the film like the TV show, a romantic comedy with a romantic background, and to have that sixties feeling, but in 1999—the way I think London would look if Peter Max had never left. I was in London in those days, in the music business, on Kings Road and Carnegie Street. I had shirts made at Mr. Fish, girls wore mini-skirts. It was a pulsing, kind of revolutionary, psychedelic era—an *Avengers* era. To keep that sensibility we cleared out London. No cars or extras on the streets. It was deserted."

This new cinematic version features Sean Connery as the psychotic mastermind Sir August De Wynter, who with his secret project Prospero is wreaking havoc with England's

BELOW: Emma Peel (Uma Thurman) once more saving the world. RIGHT: Uma Thurman mixes sex appeal and danger. BELOW RIGHT: Sean Connery as bad guy Sir August De Wynter attempting a different sort of conquest.



"fine" weather. Head of the Ministry, Mother (Jim Broadbent) calls in Steed (Ralph Fiennes) and Peel (Uma Thurman) to rain down on De Wynter's parade as Peel must also contend with her evil androïdal adversary.

While Macnee puts in a cameo as Colonel Invisible Jones, Diana Rigg, although wanting to be in the film, ultimately felt that it would be unfair to what Uma Thurman was trying to achieve in reinventing the role.

"To me it was all about Steed and Peel," Weintraub continues, "That Noel Coward sort of humor, hip and sexual but you don't know if they went to bed. Did they? Even the film gives you the same feeling about that. Maybe they kiss a bit more. Years ago, I was interested in Mel Gibson as Steed, but he was doing other things and there was no other English actor that could convince me, I'm the guy." But I'm a huge fan of Ralph Fiennes from *Schindler's List* and really



loved English *Patent*. I thought, 'What a great actor, he should do films where he can have fun.'

"If my good friend Cary Grant, the quintessential movie idol, was 33, he'd be Steed. When I met Ray he was reminiscent of Cary. Besides, he was already predisposed to doing the film. For Emma Peel, we had our list of usual suspects, but sometimes an unusual suspect comes along. Uma was that. Gwyneth Paltrow was in the running, but I wanted Uma."

When I comment that it is unusual for Sean Connery to play the bad guy, Weintraub interrupts with a laugh. "Yes, he told me that this morning while he was looping at Warners. Sean and I are old friends, and when I sent him the script wanting him to be the villain he said, 'Forget it, it's not good enough or big enough for me.' I called him and said, 'Come on Sean, this is a great role. I only





need you for six weeks.' He said, come see him in Spain with the writer. So I went, and three days later Sean agreed. He's a tough guy and plays a rather large teddy bear."

A teddy bear? Connery himself fills us in

and I am the head teddy bear counseling them, and I have my two sidekicks so there's 11 of us in this room. So I take off my head and say, 'You all know who I am and I know all of you, but you can't know each other.' So they just sit there in their costumes. It's so surrealistic and hilarious. Furthermore, I have two sisters, April and June.

"I liked the sense of style of the show, and when I read the script I knew Uma and Ralph were in it, and that made a difference, because no matter how good or bad your villain

is, these two need to work good. I nearly worked with Uma when she was 17.

"Sir August is operatic and more eccentric and a much kind of richer vein. Originally he was positioned in Scotland but the geog-

ABOVE: Steed and Peel in a tense moment as they try to stop Sir August.
CENTER: A trio of original Avengers; clockwise from top left, Diana Rigg, Honor Blackman, Patrick MacNee.
RIGHT: Emma Peel (Uma Thurman)

on the details. "Well, the teddy bears were an extraordinary idea, and it gets into 'The Teddy Bears Picnic' and all the themes and different colors. You've never seen anything until you see a table with eight teddy bears,

Original Avenging





Steed's secret agent persona was reminiscent of James Bond and Ian Fleming.

—The character of Jonathan Steed, a handsome, sophisticated, and somewhat mysterious secret agent, was created by Emma Peel. She was a former model who also played Sherlock Holmes and the woman who walks like Sherlock Holmes. I have this great British sense of walk. It's very inventive. I use a staff as Steed has done.

When asked if his role bore any similarity to a certain special agent, Connery answers, "Well, it's very English. It's almost an Edwardian dandy costume, sword again, cocaine, whatever, and there's kind of parallels, but it's not really. It's *The Avengers*. It's a rich seam, and they've pulled out of it what there is."

To Fleming, it was important that he didn't try to imitate Macnee's Steed but rather to absorb what he gave to the character, then make it his own. He quips, "But I have kept

the essence, the just-escaped and I think the secret agent thing."

A second, somewhat different, and less successful, version of *The Avengers* was created by the same team. It was a more serious, more dramatic, and more complex series. It was a more serious, more dramatic, and more complex series. It was a more serious, more dramatic, and more complex series. It was a more serious, more dramatic, and more complex series.

With a bullet wound? Weiner responds, "Although the writers and producers were adult, and kids just got the fraction of *Avengers* out of it. We've a lot of adult and kids. That's the key, and that's what I'm trying to figure out right now."

Why choose Jeremiah Chechik (*Dateline*, *Tell Tale*) to direct this? Weintraub recalls with a grin, "When I gave him the [Mac] person."

Continued on page 77



The original

Avengers evolved from the series flop, *Police Surgeon*, which starred Ian Hendry as Dr. David Keel. An idea was conceived to introduce a secret agent character named Steed to be Keel's new sidekick. A 1961 actor's strike stopped production, causing Hendry to move on. However, creator Sydney Newman forged the

notion of introducing a woman to be Steed's partner. After a six-month search, judo-chopping, leather-clad Honor Blackman was cast as Cathy Gale. Three years later she moved on to played Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger* and five-year Shakespeare veteran Diana Rigg continued the kinkiness.

This purely escapist show centered on Jonathan Steed (Patrick Macnee), a suave, unflappable, proper British secret agent and his leather-jumpsuited, karate-kicking,

every male adolescent's secret fantasy sidekick, Mrs. Emma Peel. Their planned or accidental missions involved matching wits with a bizarre collection of diabolical geniuses who wanted to take over the world through a menagerie of fantastic schemes. Far-fetched technical devices, wittily absurd villains and the cool and clever Steed made this fantasy espionage series uniquely far-out. Essentially, it attempted to out-James-Bond James Bond.

In 1968, Mrs. Peel reunited

with her long lost husband, Linda Thomson, a younger and more voluptuous woman, stepped in as Steed's new partner Tara King. With French financial backing, the series was resurrected in 1976 as *The New Avengers*. Uncertain how long Macnee wanted to be on the show, two young, new *Avengers*, Mike Gambit (Gareth Hunt) and Purdy (Joanna Lumley) were introduced. Steed stayed and the show appeared as late night movies on CBS.



The new TV
season brings
a wealth

SCI-FI'S FALL

of riches
for hungry
sci-fi fans.





TV PREVIEW

BY MELISSA PERENSON



Science fiction is enjoying a renaissance these days. You need look no further than the upcoming fall TV season, which is packed with new and returning sci-fi offerings, to find evidence of this growing trend. The best news is that this trend is being shared across broadcast, cable, and syndicated television alike, leaving the scrupulous science fiction viewer with more options than ever before.

The state of sci-fi TV today is a far cry from where things were a decade ago, when *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was just starting its 2nd season in syndication as basically the best SF game in town—not to mention the only SF game in town. On network television alone, there are six new science fiction series slated to be aired this fall, with others on the docket as midseason replacements. Factor in syndication and cable, and it's a veritable feast for those who enjoy science fiction. Will all of these new series last the season? Probably not. But you never do know when the next *X-Files* may be lurking around the corner!

THE NETWORK NEWCOMERS

Proving that everything old is new again is ABC's remake of *Fantasy Island*. No longer will you hear echoes of Tatoo's inimitable, "Da plane! Da plane!" This time, Malcolm McDowell's (*Star Trek: Gen-*

erations, *A Clockwork Orange*) Mr. Roarke has three able assistants in facilitating bringing the fantasies of others to life, including: the beautiful Ariel (played by *Twin Peaks* alum Mädchen Amick); and the devoted duo of Cal (Louis Lombardi) and Harry (Edward Hibbert), both of whom owe Roarke some karmic debt. Executive-produced by filmmaker Barry Sonnenfeld (*Men In Black*, *Get Shorty*, *The Addams Family*) and Barry Josephson, the series has been thoroughly updated for the '90s and given a decidedly sci-fi bent: Mr. Roarke wears gray Armani instead of island white. And the staff can make both your dreams—and nightmares—come true. The series also stars Fyvush Finkel, the character actor most recently seen as the ever-grandstanding lawyer on *Picket Fences*.

Also on ABC is *Cupid*, a modern-day twist on the Greek myths. From director/executive producer Scott Winant (*My So-Called Life*, *thirtysomething*), Joe Voci, and Scott Sanders, this romantic comedy posits that the sarcastic Trevor Hale

(Jeremy Piven, last seen on *Ellen*) is really Cupid. While in Bellevue for a psychiatric evaluation, Hale reveals he was kicked off Mount Olympus for un-godlike behavior. He's now forced to do his penance on Earth by uniting 100 couples without any magical assistance—meaning, sans the help of his trusty bow and arrow. Meanwhile, his mission may begin at home: While at Bellevue, Hale is put under the care of Dr. Claire Allen (Paula Marshall), a young psychiatrist and expert in love and romance to whom he is immediately attracted.

Over at Fox, the network that is forever going to be looking to duplicate the success of *The X-Files*, there are three new series with a sci-fi slant. The first is *Bronxstone*, starring *thirtysomething*'s forever young academic and surfer, Peter Horton. In this series, Horton plays Zeke Stone, a New York detective who finds himself condemned to spend eternity in Hell when he's killed in the line of duty 15 years after murdering his wife's rapist in



SCI-FI'S FALL TV PREVIEW



cold blood. However, a veritable jail break in Hell means that the very Devil (John Glover) who judged him no better than the criminals he'd hunted on the streets of New York now needs his help. Unrest in Hell has led 113 of the most evil and vile souls trapped there to escape above, returning to the land of the living with deadly supernatural powers that will wreak havoc on unsuspecting lives. So the Devil makes a pact with Stone, offering him heavenly redemption in return for his services as the bounty hunter of these ANOL demons. Of course, there is a catch: If Stone fails in his mission, then all of humanity is bound for Hell.

Tapping on the current created by such modern horror successes as *Scream*, *Scream 2*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is *Hollyweird*. Executive-produced by *Scream*'s horrormeister Wes Craven and Shaun Cassidy (of *American Gothic* and *Road*), *Hollyweird* combines comic tendencies with Craven's sarcastic sensibilities and his innate understanding of what's scary—and what's cool. It stars three Midwestern teens (including Bodhi Elfman, who in real life is married to *Dharma and Greg*'s Jenna Elfman) who take their local cable show on the road when they move to the West Coast. There they get caught up in the darker side of Los Angeles, chronicling unsolved and bizarre Hollywood murders.

Most promising of all is the new ani-

LEFT: Both aliens and humans are treated in deep space in *Mercy Point*, bringing the ER to sci-fi. **ABOVE:** A CIA agent attempts to change history in *Seven Days*.

imated half-hour series from Matt Groening, master of satirical humor and the creator of that long-running classic, *The Simpsons*. Called *Futurama*, this unconventional story is set on Earth, only a thousand years into the future. The show follows the misadventures of Fry, who was an ordinary 20th-century resident who escapes his mundane life by traveling 1,000 years into the future, where he hooks up with a friendly robot named Bender and a beautiful woman named Leela. Fry quickly discovers that while there are many changes in store for the future, the basic joys and sorrows of life remain constant. And some things—like the sorry state of highway traffic—never change. Although now recast, the late comedian Phil Hartman had originally been offered a voice-over role on the show, as a follow-on to his lending his voice for years to various *Simpsons* characters.

Building on its flagship series *Star Trek: Voyager*, UPN offers two new sci-fi series, *Seven Days* and *Mercy Point*. Airing as the lead-in to *Voyager*, *Seven Days* stars Jonathan LaPaglia as Frank Parker, a rogue CIA operative selected to travel seven days back in time in order to reverse the effects of tragedies after the fact. His first mission: prevent the White House from being destroyed during a suicide commando bombing that kills both the President and the Vice President.

Mercy Point stars Joe Morton (*Equal Justice*, *Blues Brothers 2000*) in this drama that's essentially *Star Trek*'s futuristic and sleek Sickbay crossed with *Babylon 5*'s space station politics and the medical emotional drama of *ER*. Set in a state-of-the-art hospital deep in outer space, the show follows the lives of an elite team of medics—referred to as mednauts—dedicated to serving both human and aliens living in the orbital community. The show also stars Maria Del Mar (*Relativity*), Brian McNamara (*Arachnophobia*),

Alexandra Wilson (*Homefront*), and Hippocrates (*Hip*)—*Mercy Point*'s own holographic medical expert.

Meanwhile, over at the WB, is *Charmed*, which stars *Beverly Hills 90210* alumna Sherry Doherty in her first series since leaving the show that briefly made her a household name. Upon discovering she and her two younger sisters are witches, Doherty must learn to use her powers for the benefit of the greater good. Think *The Witches of Eastwick*, only for the *Buffy* the Vampire Slayer generation. Co-starring Holly Marie Combs and Lori Loughlin, *Charmed* is being produced by the man who knows how to leverage young angst—Aaron Spelling.

Down the road, ABC has two sci-fi mid-season replacements you could look for: One is a Carsey-Werner sitcom tentatively titled *Earth 2*, which stars Mark Addy as one half of an intergalactic human and alien couple. The other is *Strange Days* (working title), from former *The X-Files* writer/executive producer Howard Gordon and *Chicago Hope* writer/producer Tim Kring; the show offers a reversal of

The X-Files, in which Scully's faith in science is paramount to belief. This universe provides an exploration of a nefarious future world where science is valued above all else; big business is essentially funding and controlling scientific development, and the answers sought by Paul Turner (Tim Guinee)—a former government scientist who was exposed to chemical weapons during the Gulf War—lead to more troubling questions than could have ever been imagined.

RETURNING FAVORITES

Look for lots of changes coming to your favorite current sci-fi series, too.

All eyes are on Fox's *The X-Files* to see just how the show handles the transition from moody Vancouver to bright and sunny Los Angeles, the show's new home for the 6th and any future seasons. Longtime executive producer R.W. Goodwin chose to stay in Vancouver rather than relocate with the series. Attempting to fill the void is now co-executive producer



SCI-FI'S FALL TV PREVIEW

Michael Watkins, formerly executive producer of the critically acclaimed CBS drama *Brooklyn South*, Watkins has a two-year deal with *The X-Files* that encompasses both directing and many of the duties once handled by Goodwin.

According to co-executive producer Frank Spotnitz, you can expect to see Mulder and Scully visiting more Southern and Southwestern locales that up until now haven't been represented in the series, exploring cases in states like Florida, Texas, and California—all of which tend to get sun. Meanwhile, creator and executive producer Chris Carter promises that the new season will pick up where last season's finale left off, which is good to hear considering the finale's events are barely referred to in this summer's *X-Files* feature film, let alone resolved in the movie. Plus, Carter says there'll be more discussion of the other aspects of the aliens, cloning, and government conspiracies not explored in the film. "We'll see a lot more of that because now we've set it up," he says capily.

Changes are in store for Carter's other series, too. Word is that *Millennium*'s Frank



LEFT: Frank Black is in for some changes, as *Millennium* returns for a third season.

ABOVE: After some doubt, *The X-Files* lives on, moving to sunny Los Angeles.



Black and company may be moving location to Washington, DC—even though the production itself will remain in Vancouver. "I'm going to be back on the show in a full-time way," reveals Carter. "I have big ideas about how to do some things that I think need to be done to the series that'll make it a better series than it is right now."

Now that new character Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) has been introduced into the crew, UPN's *Voyager* is going to settle down a bit. Executive producer Jeri Taylor's departure has left Brannon Braga, the series' other executive producer at the helm. Joining Braga's staff are Nick Sagan and Michael Taylor; longtime

executive story editor and writer Lisa Klink has also opted to leave the show. Next season, Braga is aiming to build on the foundation of this past season, which saw *Voyager* take on bigger and more ambitious story lines. Seven will continue to evolve, trying to balance her humanity with her Borg nature. And the season opener will focus on Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), whose character sometimes became lost in the shuffle last season during the push to establish Seven's overwhelmingly strong character.

Among the other returning series are NBC's thriller *Profiler*, the WB's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and NBC's sitcom *3rd Rock From the Sun*, which enters its 3rd season this fall (and was also tragically affected by Phil Hartman's untimely passing; last May's cliffhanger had to be reshot to eliminate Hartman's scenes, in which he played an irate boyfriend who kidnaps Harry the alien).

SYNDICATION & CABLE

Leading the charge, of course, is TNT's *Batylon 5*, which finally concludes its 5th



ABOVE: Seven of Nine continues to evolve. **RIGHT:** Farrell says her final farewell. **OPPOSITE ABOVE:** The latest *Sliders* crew. **OPPOSITE BELOW:** A new face for *Highlander*.

SCI-FI'S FALL TV PREVIEW

season with the airing of the final four episodes starting in November. Also scheduled to air in November is the third original *Babylon 5* movie, *The River of Souls*. This movie will feature such regular cast members as Tracy Scoggins, Jerry Doyle, Richard Biggs, and Jeff Conaway, as well as guest stars Martin Sheen (*Talk of the Town*), *The American President*, *Apocalypse Now*) and Ian McShane. The fourth *Babylon 5* movie, *Fall to Arms*, will air in January 1999, and will introduce the story line of *Crusade*, which is J. Michael Straczynski's new space travel series set in the *Babylon 5* universe. *Crusade* began production in mid-summer, and will be debuting in January as well.

Entering its 7th and final season is *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

According to executive producer Ira Steven Behr, who's been with the series since its inception, expect the unexpected. "As Rick Berman said to me, 'Look Ira, I want you to know something. *Deep Space Nine* might be going off the air, but the *Star Trek* franchise has to continue on. So you can't destroy the Federation,'" laughs Behr. "Which we weren't planning on doing, but I think what that comment said to me was that there's no limits to what we can possibly do. In the 7th season, I want to make sure that no story remains on the sidelines. I've told everyone this should be the strangest season yet. We should do whatever we want, get every story out of our system we want to tell. Go places where people don't expect the show to go. Wrap up as many threads of this series as possible. And end on a satisfying note." As for the absence of series regular Terry Farrell (*Jadzia Dax*), who chose to leave the series at the end of last season and not renew her contract, Behr



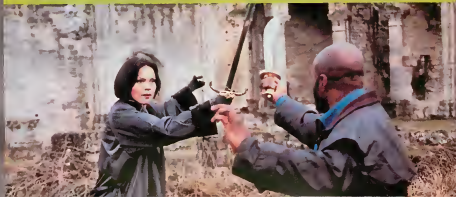
mus, "We'll deal with it. It's going to give us a hell of a lot of great Wolf and Sisko stories next year."

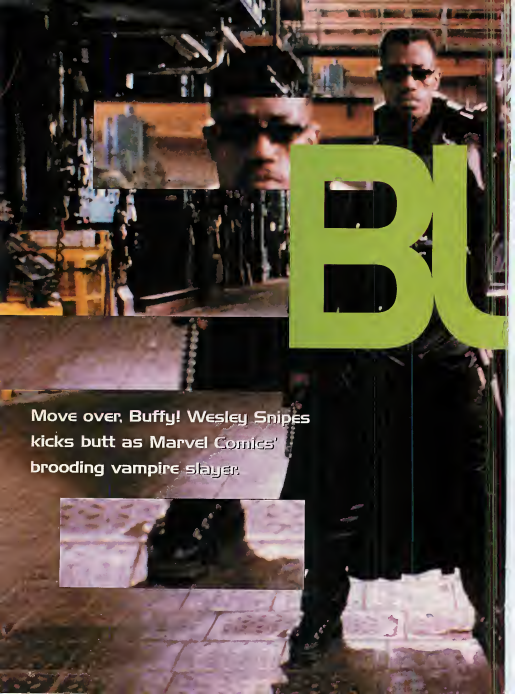
From the vaults of Gene Roddenberry comes Tribune's syndicated *Earth: Final Conflict*, which is coming off a successful debut year and returns this October with a full season of new episodes. Executive-produced by David Kirschner and Majel Barrett Roddenberry, the 2nd season will continue to explore the motives of the Companions and the battles of the Resis-

tance, taking the series on a new direction of its planned five-year arc. Robert Leeshock joins the cast as Liam Kincaid.

The legendary *Mystery Science Theater 3000* has been renewed for a 10th season, and new episodes will start in the first quarter of 1999. Marking the show's 3rd season on the Sci-Fi Channel, *MST3K* has no plans to change its winning formula: You'll see the same cast, same crew, same wacky humor as usual.

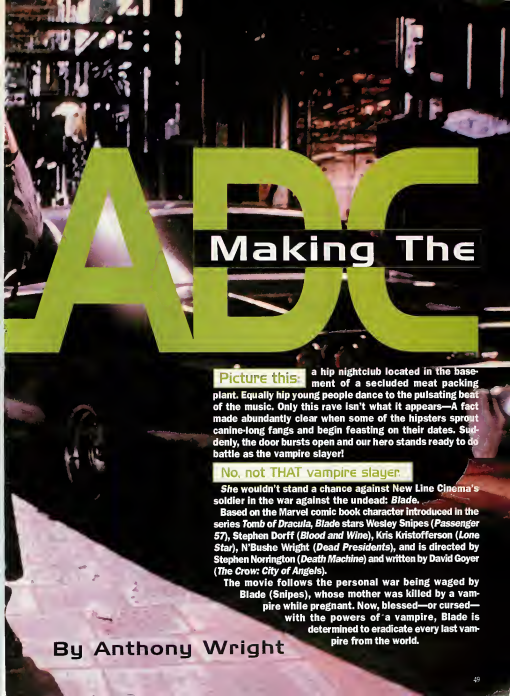
Continued on page 76





Move over, Buffy! Wesley Snipes
kicks butt as Marvel Comics'
brooding vampire slayer.





ABC

Making The

Picture this: a hip nightclub located in the basement of a secluded meat packing plant. Equally hip young people dance to the pulsating beat of the music. Only this rave isn't what it appears—A fact made abundantly clear when some of the hipsters sprout canine-long fangs and begin feasting on their dates. Suddenly, the door bursts open and our hero stands ready to do battle as the vampire slayer!

No, not THAT vampire slayer.

She wouldn't stand a chance against New Line Cinema's soldier in the war against the undead: *Blade*.

Based on the Marvel comic book character introduced in the series *Tomb of Dracula*, *Blade* stars Wesley Snipes (*Passenger 57*), Stephen Dorff (*Blood and Wine*), Kris Kristofferson (*Lone Star*), N'Bushe Wright (*Dead Presidents*), and is directed by Stephen Norrington (*Death Machine*) and written by David Goyer (*The Crow: City of Angels*).

The movie follows the personal war being waged by *Blade* (Snipes), whose mother was killed by a vampire while pregnant. Now, blessed—or cursed—with the powers of a vampire, *Blade* is determined to eradicate every last vampire from the world.

By Anthony Wright

He is befriended by Abraham Whistler (Kristofferson), a professional vampire hunter, who takes Blade's raw talents and forges them into a deadly fighting machine.

Standing in their path is the blood-crazed, power-mad vampire Deacon Frost. As leader of the Assembly of Vampires—the governing body that rules over all vampires—Frost is determined to destroy all humans by unleashing the genocidal "Blood Tide."

The movie began production early in 1997, but the idea to make the film began five years earlier. Explains producer Peter Frankfurt, "I had just finished *Juice*, which had a predominately black cast. I was talking to the head of Marvel Films and I commented about the absence of black superheroes in the comics. A few days later I got a copy of the *Blade* comic book in the mail."

What intrigued Frankfurt even more was that the character wasn't your standard, cut-and-dry superhero. "Blade appealed to me because he's not altogether good. He lives to kill vampires and exact vengeance. Blade has a dark side."

Screenwriter David Goyer agrees. "Blade is a classic tragic figure. Neither human nor vampire, he is rejected by both. As a result, he is filled with self-loathing, and his only way of projecting that self-loathing outward is by killing vampires."

However, before production could begin, New Line Cinema had to acquire the rights to *Blade*. And despite interest by Marvel Comics' founder Stan Lee and Marvel executive Avi Arad, "the process of acquiring the rights to *Blade* was a lengthy one."

In the '70s, Lee and Marvel had sold off the rights and creative control to many of its flagship characters, including *Captain America*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *Spider-Man*. As a result, many of the subsequent films produced were of such poor quality that many never saw the light of a movie projector. In recent years, Marvel has spent a great deal of money buying back those rights and are now more selective as to who gets them.

Adding to New Line's problems was Marvel's recent bankruptcy filing, the resulting corporate infighting and subsequent Chapter 11 reorganization.

Nevertheless, as Goyer points out, "Marvel liked the script a lot. They were really happy with it."

Lee agrees with Goyer's assessment. "He nailed it. This is a very, very scary script with a surprise on every page. The vampires are terrifying and fantastic at the same time. You've never seen anything like this before, anywhere."

Considering that *Blade* is described as "an immortal warrior who battles a thriving underworld of vampires," the

actor selected to portray him would have to be an imposing one. "Blade is a loner with no social skills," clarifies Frankfurt. "He's haunted by his mother's death and he's driven by vengeance. We needed a highly athletic actor who could convey Blade's profound emotional torment."

Fortunately, one of the actors interested in the endeavor was action veteran Wesley Snipes (the other actor who also expressed interest was Laurence Fishburne).

"First and foremost, he's a brilliant actor," states co-producer Bob Engelman. "And he happens to be an expert in martial arts." Engelman, who was one of the creative forces behind *Martial Law*, goes on further to explain why Snipes was perfect for the action-heavy role. "Blade is this almighty soldier. And he's half vampire, so he's got this incredible strength and endurance. That's exactly what Wesley exudes: strength and power."

Snipes returned the producers' excitement for the project. "The material is rich, and the role presented a unique opportunity to play a really complex action hero." The actor went on to say that "Blade is engaged in a deadly battle for survival, and at the same time he's in a constant struggle with his own dark side."

So excited about the project was Snipes, that he brought his own fledgling production company, Amen Ra, on board, so that he could be more involved in all aspects of the production.

With a script and a star in hand, the producers then had to select a director. Rather than go with an established director with preconceived notions on the world of vampires, the producers looked about for someone who shared their unique vision. "Vampires are almost always depicted in films as these monstrous, disfigured fiends with long deadly fangs and claws," explains Frankfurt. "There's usually a gothic overtone, and the vampires skulk about in graveyards, caves or catacombs."

For *Blade*, Frankfurt was looking for a different perspective. "The vampire world is highly organized," explains the producer. "There's a pseudo-aristocratic society where political and social structure is determined by class. Humans, on the other hand, are ragged and disorganized, and their lives are in complete disorder. We had to have a director who could look at the material and envision this world which is totally different from anything we've seen before."

Surprisingly, the answer to their search came in the form of a young British film-

ABOVE: His mother was killed by a vampire while she was pregnant with him, and now Wesley Snipes brings him to life. From the pages of Marvel Comics comes *Blade*, the vampire slayer, shown taking vengeance on one of the undead.





maker whose previous experience consisted of only one feature film and a handful of music videos: Stephen Norrington.

"Stephen didn't want to do anything that smells or tastes like a vampire movie," remembers Frankfurt of his young director. "He said he wanted to make a film which is totally real; he wanted to make a movie that would live and breathe. He didn't want to make a comic book, and he didn't want to make a vampire film."

Snipes puts it much more succinctly. "Basically, he's off his rocker. It's a good thing he works in the movie business. Otherwise we'd have him committed."

For the film's production designers, set decorators and costume experts, Norrington's approach to the film created not only a new approach to vampires, but all new problems as well. Production designer Kirk Petrucci, whose credits include *Murder in the First* and *Three Ninjas*, described Norrington's vision as one in which "the vampire world is angular; it's hard, very reflective, glossy, cold. And the human world is chaotic and rusty; it's organic, and it's in decay."

Petrucci worked alongside cinematographer Theo Van de Sande

(*Wayne's World*) and costume designer Sonja Hays (*Eight Heads in a Duffel Bag*) to establish a continuity of atmosphere. "Color is extremely important," says Petrucci. "The camera moves continuously from one scene to another, and you have to make sure that there's a continuity of hue; the colors of costumes and props, even vehicles, are critical. We used a combination of high-tech, utilitarian shapes and primitive materials." And, as Petrucci explains, they even added a new twist on the vampire. "We wanted to convey the idea that vampires might have come from another, more advanced universe. So



we've added a touch of alien to the mix."

For Snipes, the director's approach to Blade provided him with a new opportunity to do something he hadn't done before. "I've played a lot of good guys. Good guys are cool, but they're soft; they're limited in what they can do. I wanted to play something where I could be enigmatic and dangerous."

"With a comic book character, anything goes. You can create a different voice and a new appearance. This character isn't Wesley Snipes. He's Blade. Wesley doesn't exist anymore." He goes on to explain, "Blade is a tormented soul. He's got this internal struggle going on between his good side and his bad side. Blade is either a human trapped in a vampire's body or a vampire restrained by his humanity. I'm not sure which."

And, of course, there was one other factor that was very important to Snipes. "Blade is a brother. And that's extremely unusual. For some reason, we seem to have been sold on this idea that vampires don't like black men. They bite everybody else but the brother. But, that's not their way it is. It's just that the brother lives in the 'hood, not in a castle in Transylvania. His crib is a warehouse down by the railroad tracks."

Still, Blade isn't the only character in the movie with his or her own problems to be faced.

When preparing the script for *BLADE*, Goyer decided to take a different tack when it came

time to adapt the character of Deacon Frost, the only other character taken from the comic book. "Blade struggles to subdue his vampire heritage, while Frost is this purely evil being who has completely embraced vampirism. He endeavors to entice Blade to reject his humanity and succumb to the inner darkness."

Pulling that off wouldn't be easy for 24-year-old actor Steven Dorff. "He's this ultra-stylized, '90s kind of cat, who is ruthlessly ambitious and manipulative and completely corrupt," explains

Dorff. "I was intrigued by him. There's something about evil that's inherently alluring."

Alluring was hardly the word Kris Kristofferson used when he was approached with the idea of playing the mentor Abraham Whistler, one of Goyer's original characters. "I didn't know who Blade was, and I wasn't familiar with the comic. Plus, I wasn't sure I was equipped for the role of an action hero sidekick."

However, there was one thing in the character that Kristofferson could connect to. "Abraham Whistler is compelled to kill vampires because they massacred his wife and children. I have a large family of my own, and it's the most important part of my life. So, it was easy for me to identify with Whistler's anguish and his urge for vengeance."

For N'Bushe Wright, who plays the role of a young hematologist who befriends Blade after she is wounded in a vampire attack, the role presented her with the opportunity to work with Snipes. "I really wanted this role."

"She's this accomplished, very focused professional whose entire world is destroyed by a phenomenon which defies medical science," offers Wright. "She's infected by a vampire bite, and she knows she's turning into one of them [so she] is determined to find a serum to cure the vampire virus. Of course she wants to save herself. But, she

also wants to save Blade." And though there are no romantic scenes between the two actors, Wright says that the connection between the two characters is something much more than physical. "Somehow, she touched his soul, and now she's a part of him."

All of the actors do agree on one thing, *Blade* was a tough film to make, physically. "I've been waiting for this for a long time," says Snipes, who did many of the stunts himself. "Blade gave me the opportunity to pay homage to some of the classic Asian films. We're doing things with swords and other weapons, and wires—things that seem to be only done in Hong Kong."

Adds Frankfurt, "Blade is highly disciplined, and that influences the way he wages war. He moves with almost surgical precision."

Goyer put it much simpler. "We basically just let him go nuts. Just think—Shaft with a stake."

For Kristofferson, the results were different. "The scenes where I limp around in a leg brace and fire weapons in every direction—and hit the mark, of course—those were new experiences for me. I ended up with bruises from my ass to my ankles from the scene where Whistler confronts Frost. Stephen stomped my face in the ground until I bled."

Although Wright "appreciated having



a stunt double for action sequences," she still claims to have gotten a workout on the set. "I was Miss Action Mama."

Perhaps the biggest problem facing the movie is the very thing it is about: vampires.

Over the past few years, movies featuring the undead have been less than successful or outright failures. *Interview with the Vampire*, the movie adaptation of Anne Rice's popular novel of the same name, featured actors Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas, and Christian Slater. Still, it only saw marginal success at the box office. Likewise, the high-budget *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, with its big-name cast—Gary Oldman, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves, Winona Ryder—and spectacular special effects, saw only brief success before dis-



ABOVE: The road *Blade* travels to enact his vengeance is not an easy one: Screenwriter David Goyer has populated the vampire slayer's world with all manner of bizarre enemies.

appearing from the box office charts. Even more recent films such as *Dusk Till Dawn*, which was created by Quentin Tarantino, directed by Robert Rodriguez, and starred George Clooney failed to garner more than a passing interest among movie fans.

"This isn't a vampire story," explains Frankfurt. "It's an introduction to a phenomenal action hero, the likes of which we've never seen on the screen before. It's an encounter with a world audiences have never even imagined."

Adds Engelman, "The vampires have the world wired, and that's one of the elements that distinguishes this film from standard fare."

Goyer sees the film's success coming

from the fact that it takes "a more naturalistic way" of telling the story, that by placing the events in our universe it makes the film seem more real to the audience. "*Blade* de-mythologizes the vampire to a certain extent," tells Goyer. "The vampires in *Blade* are disgusting punks. This is the real world." In other words, there will be no running into the local church to escape these creatures of the undead.

For visual effects supervisor Kevin Haug, the success of the film may lay in its stunning—and graphic—visual and special effects. Explains Haug, "Special effects are things that are possible. When [a character's arm] gets sliced off, that's a special effect. When [the character's] arm regenerates itself, that's a visual effect. These days visual effects and special effects are usually integrated, so that you're using both techniques at the same time. My job is to make things happen that are outside the realm of possibility."

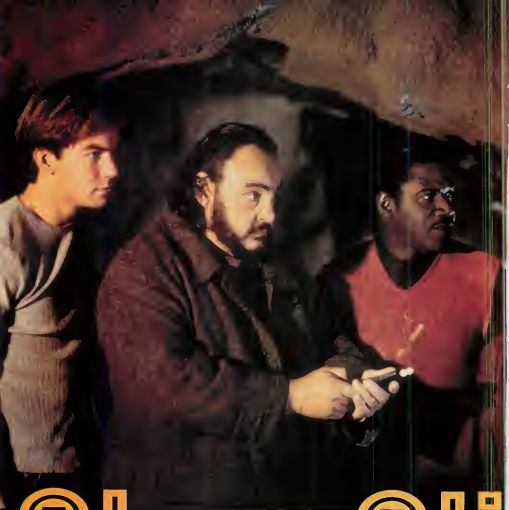
A job made all the more difficult during a sequence involving the actors and a speeding train. "First of all, it's too dangerous to put the actors right next to the train," reveals Haug. "And, of course Stephen [Norrington] wants the train to fly around this curve faster than is physically possible. And finally, the track is too short." The answer: a computer-generated train.

"It's a challenge for the actors," admits Haug. "Because they have to respond to something that really isn't there. And in this case, it isn't some ordinary train—it's *The Train from Hell*."

All in all, Haug feels that it may be the effects that generate fan interest.

"It's pretty amazing. *Blade* is Magic." Still another drawing point may be the film's "look." Costume designer

Continued on page 76



Star Si



WHEN IT COMES TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF
BRINGING GOOD SF TO TELEVISION,
JOHN RHYSDAVIES FEELS YOUR PAIN.

der

BY JIM BOUTILLIER

"If ANYTHING WE DO MATTERS — IT'S trying to make a difference!" So speaks John Rhys-Davies, best known for his three-year stint as the crass Prof. Maximilian Arturo on Fox's former series *SLIDERS*. Although he was a series regular on the popular *UNTOUCHABLES*, and has appeared in numerous feature films including the *Indiana Jones* movies, Rhys-Davies has gained much press because of his outspoken displeasure with the powers-that-be on *SLIDERS*, and of course the subsequent demise of his alter ego, Professor Arturo.

"Hollywood can only understand success and say, 'Let's repeat that!'"



Rhys-Davies continues to make lasting impressions on and off screen, now free from the creative indifference he suggests was rampant on *Sliders*. A perfectionist and proponent for quality television, Rhys-Davies now has the freedom to seek out roles that reinforce his belief in supporting shows of integrity. That is why the world of *Star Trek* has seen the holy interpretation of a classic, Leonardo DaVinci, a.k.a. John Rhys-Davies.

Rhys-Davies' troubles started as soon as he came to *Sliders* with promises of making the professor who he wanted. "They were looking for somebody with weight and authority to play the part of an irascible professor," so Rhys-Davies thought, "... and I suspect the part was really meant to be the cowardly professor in *Lost In Space*, which I think I said at the time was something I didn't particularly want to play. But, we all agreed it would change and evolve when we came down to doing it. So, it was a battle that had to be fought in the early stages."

Although he is quick to say he loved the professor in *Lost In Space*, Rhys-Davies simply doesn't believe it was appropriate to *Sliders*.

Besides the conflict over his character, he was constantly found fighting for quality control and show integrity, namely in the writing and blatant copycat stories he says *Sliders* "borrowed" from popular, current movies. "I thought season two was a complete pass. The third season, again, basically you have an executive producer who's not interested in science fiction, who doesn't understand it, who doesn't write it, and a bunch of not-terribly-good writers who are insolently derivative."

Pointing out that the writers said "... the network had forced them into doing these things," Rhys-Davies can believe the truth of network demands for success, even at the expense of quality. "Hollywood can only understand success and say, 'Let's repeat that!' So you have the *Twisters*' episode early on which is a straight rip-off. But of course our twister is man-made and is



upside down, which reveals a remarkable ignorance about the physics of twisters! It then proceeded to become a rip-off of every film that you have ever seen, particularly toward the end — fortunately by which time I had been fired. I don't want to be associated with a writer who would say to me, 'John, I can steal from anything,' as if this was a badge of honor and not a badge of absolute creative disgrace." If there is something John Rhys-Davies stands for it is quality, originality, and creative appreciation. "I was taught to respect writers, to value the word above all else.... Intellectual property should be treated with the same respect you would treat other property. And the cry, 'But everybody does it,' won't do."

He is very passionate about the quality of work and those associated with it. This has been his main point of contention with *Sliders*, regardless of what other gossip would have you believe. In fact, he even told the other cast members to let him fight the battle for them, he knew it was coming — you can ask the other actors! "They will tell you, that early on I told them to keep their heads down and their noses to the grindstone and let me do the fighting for the series." Which was no problem for Rhys-Davies because of his genuine admiration for his cast-mates, another feeling shared by the actors on the show. "Let me say this, if you ask any of the four of us we would say that, the greatest pleasure of coming to work each day was that we would get to spend time with each other. I have never worked with three more harmonious and good souls as I worked with on that show. As for Jerry himself, were I to have another son



ABOVE: John Rhys-Davies recurring role on *Star Trek: Voyager* as a holographic Leonardo Da Vinci—shown here with Tuvok (Tim Russ)—has delighted sci-fi fans. **BELOW:** Rhys-Davies' role in *The Untouchables* was, well, untouchable.

role in *THE UNTOUCHABLES* was, well, untouchable.

....Oh, give me a gun to shoot some writers just to encourage the rest!

I wish it were Jerry... I think he is so gifted. He is ideally, temperamentally suited to succeed and it was my joy and privilege to work with him. Sabrina is a darling and I love her. And Trent is the best, truest golden soul of the lot, just a dear, dear man."

The whole experience of working on *Sliders* was as much a headache as it was a headache for Rhys-Davies, in that in *Sliders* he saw a great opportunity to tell really great sci-fi stories, a possibility that he even now holds out a little hope for. "The reason I went on about *Sliders* is that the premise is the best premise I think I've ever known for a television series. You can go anywhere in the world and it's worth fighting for. That show could have been, and could still be, Universal's *Star Trek*." As for the show's future? "I'll wait to see who the head writer is and what science fiction he has done before, before I make any prediction." And the reason? "I won't say which year, [but] the head writer turned around to me and said, 'It's easy for you to criticize John, you don't know how hard it is to come up with ideas for this thing.' You can go anywhere in the universe!"

What is Rhys-Davies's solution to the creative slump of the series? "It is so blatantly easy to transform that show it makes me want to scream: 'Oh, give me a gun to shoot some writers just to encourage the rest!'"

Of course, he is cynically joking. However, he does have an explanation for the writing on the show, and a personal solution for its betterment. "Writers at present have no shame, and until they develop a sense of

shame we will only get derivative crap. I'll be honest with you, I think a million dollars an episode is very adequate to do the series. I could do that series brilliantly for a million dollars. Writers should be paid for what they produce. This whole business of carrying writers on staff irritates me beyond belief. But you cannot ultimately fight against a monolithic, self-interested stupidity."

This actor knows about script butchery, not just through acting it, but because it happened to his own script for the series. A script that was turned into every cliché Rhys-Davies dislikes about sci-fi, and ultimately ended up being the demise of the professor. "I submitted one of five ideas: It was a really low-key, standard idea, the sort of level that *Sliders* should have. It showed scientific curiosity and moral choices. And that was the episode they turned into a double-parter with all the predictable things. Anyone in the military, the government, is always wrong [according to them]. In every episode of *Sliders* you will find that essential bias. Then they had the bad soldier, he's out of control and has to suck brains out — *EW!*"

"I was hoping I could write this episode. The classic thing was the writers do not want John to write one because it would be bad for their morale. So I let it go, they paid me for the idea. And anyway, I was very anxious to get out of the series, I wasn't going to rock the boat at that stage! You give up in the end. The whole point of *Sliders* is that it is [about] alternative universes, and it should challenge our expectations and not bolster our prejudices."

Network television is increasingly becoming the thing watched by inner-city dwellers, the less financially privileged and less edu-





BELOW: Rhys-Davies, shown with Harrison Ford and Sean Connery, has brought humanity to his roles in the *INDIANA JONES* series. **ABOVE:** Mark Hamill and John Rhys-Davies, about to be digitized into the CD-ROM game, *STAR TREK: COMMANDER*.



tionally privileged, and I think if you deprive them of intellectual honesty, of good truthful facts, it is racially and morally condescending. In other words, if you know your audience is culturally or educationally more challenged, then you have to be more scrupulous with your facts and carry the lamp of science and turn it up a little bit."

Now that *Sliders* is removed from Rhys-Davies's concerns, he is moving on to brighter projects. The actor has appeared in a variety of recent ventures that the audience should know about and have the chance to experience. Such projects include a character on *Star Trek*, a CD-ROM game, a new TV pilot for ABC, and a host of animated characters we'll regularly tune in to.

You may have noticed a familiar face on the two-part season finale of *Star Trek: Voyager*, and "Scurion," this season's opener. Rhys-Davies played the holographic character Leonardo Da Vinci. Caught in Borg space, barred from their voyage home by a race of parasitic, interdimensional organisms, Captain Kathryn Janeway retreats to the holodeck to rethink her options. Enter Rhys-Davies, or rather Leonardo Da Vinci, who offhandedly helps the captain discover a way out of their mess. And for this actor, it was a welcome break.

"When I left *Sliders* I was very tired. For the first time in my life I felt disillusioned about my trade, and I really didn't want to work. I'm an actor who would sooner work on a minor piece of film just to keep busy. And along came this *Star Trek* episode and it was such a joy, so well written. *Star Trek* to me has had a sort of idealism and vision behind it that I found admirable. I have two

philosophies and they are pretty much the same: important and integral, and are basically about the nature of thinking."

Rhys-Davies had little trouble getting along with the great cast, especially one Captain Janeway. "My lady captain I found so wonderful and delightful to work with."

And for anyone who is wondering, "I think there is an implication that in fact, it's quite possible Leonardo may reappear. And it would be a great honor. It was a delight." And the rumor was true, as you might have surmised by Rhys-Davies's recent feature guest performance in the episode entitled, "Concerning Flight." In this show, Da Vinci is inadvertently stolen, along with a large manifest of *Voyager*'s cargo, and carried off to a distant planet. When the crew tracks down the fleeing aliens to their planet, who else does the captain discover but a confused Da Vinci wearing the doctor's portable holomitter. And he is still only concerned about building a flying bird. Of course, as things heat up, the Captain and Da Vinci must combine wits and find a way to stop the aliens and get back to *Voyager*. You just never know where you'll find Rhys-Davies popping up!

Lucky for us, Rhys-Davies's experience on *Voyager* encouraged his outlook on the business. "It's a tonic just to be reminded that television can produce good work and good scripts."

Off set, expect Rhys-Davies to take his own challenge for good writing as he devotes more time to his passion for the written word. "I've got about half-a-dozen unmade scripts that I've been circumspect about

Continued on page 68

Dr. Stran



gevideo:

An All-Purpose Guide to the Identification and Classification of Science-Fictional B-Movies!

(Accept no substitutes)



It's a jungle out there. They call to you, every day. You try to resist their overtures, but no, their boxes are too bright, their titles too enticing.

Inseminoid! Battle Beyond the Stars! Tank Girl! Star Crash! Barb Wire! Omega Doom! Godzilla vs. Biolante! Dollman vs. Demonic Toys!

You clutch their video boxes in your sweating palms.

Basket Case! Brain Dead! Battle in Outer Space!

You punch the cable remote as if in a trance, turning to that premium service in the wee hours of the morning.

BY CRAIG SHAW GARDNER

Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bs



Catwomen on the Moon! Caltiki, the Immortal Monster! Crossworlds! Dinosaur!



You score those specialized sci-fi media magazines (just like this one), studying the stills, devouring the descriptions of films past and celluloid to come. **Dinosaur! Evil Spirits! Freaked! The Guyver! Highway to Hell!**

But how to judge this massive outpouring of product? Heck, the most respected video guide in the business, edited by Leonard Maltin, only seems to cover about half the titles you run across. And, frankly, do you want a video guide that gives four stars to Clifton Webb movies and doesn't even list the remake of *Gamera, Guardian of the Universe*? I think not! (Besides which, Maltin gives *Laserblast* three stars. *Laserblast* is not worth any stars. *Laserblast* is not even worth three minutes of your time.) Michael Weldon's two massive psychotronic film volumes (the *Psychotronic Video Guide* and the *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*) manage to list just about every odd thing ever committed to celluloid but the books are little more than cast lists with a sentence or two about some aspect of the film—sometimes plot, sometimes not. Weldon can't be bothered to actually judge the movies he lists. Other sources, like John Stanley's *Creature Features* series, are marginally better, but seem to be two or three years out of date by the time they see print.

What's a film fan to do?
**It, the Terror from Beyond Space!
Journey to the Seventh Planet!**

The titles never end, each one promising new wonders, new horrors, new thrills.

Then, you pop the video into your VCR.
King Kong Lives!

You settle down to another 87 minutes on Cinemax.

Lifeforce! Megaforce!

Time after time, you watch and watch,

The Guyver Dollman vs.



LEFT: Any movie with a number after its name, such as *Camosaur 2*, should be approached with extreme caution. **ABOVE:** If the movie's monster is an actor in an obvious rubber suit, such as in *Green Slime*, it's a B.

searching for the next science fiction super-nova. Why, so often, do you get burned?

The modern media universe is a true wilderness. Sound-alike titles, almost familiar names in the cast, all-too-colorful boxes, luring out your rental dollars. How might you protect yourself from the dread Stinkaroonie or, even worse, the Complete Turkey?

I'm here to tell you that it's not too late, whether you are a beginner, a tyro, even hardened videophile. All can learn to recognize the B-movie at a safe distance. And perhaps you can learn to put that video box down, or turn the cable safely to the cartoon channel, before it is too late!

Follow Craig Shaw Gardner's simple rules of video survival:

TRACKING THE WILD "B": PLUMAGE/STAR POWER:

What does the film look like at a safe distance?

RULE #1: It's not a B-movie when:

It stars Walter Koenig, Mark Hamill, or John Rhys-Davies, and it has something to do with *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

It is a B-movie when:

It stars Walter Koenig, Mark Hamill, or John Rhys-Davies in anything else.

RULE #2: The modern B-movie wants to look like something it's not.

Think *Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *The Road Warrior*, *Jurassic Park*. You will not actually be watch-

Evil Spirits! Freaked!
Demonic Toys! Highway to Hell!

Journey to the 7th Planet! Puppetmaster! Inseminoid! Basket Case! Omega Doom!

ing any of the above, but you will think about them.

The modern B-film can look like any of these. At least on the box or in the cable listing. Watching it is, of course, another matter (more on this later).

HABITAT/SETTING

Chances are good you have discovered a B-film when the main action of the film takes place in one of the following:

1. a spaceship, or space station. It must, of course, be ALMOST deserted (basically, like *Alien*, but with fewer crew members).

2. the wasteland, preferably after a devastating war (basically, like *The Road Warrior*, but with smaller gangs).

3. the future, which seems to take place mostly indoors and looks suspiciously like that new office building on the other side of town (basically, like *Blade Runner*, but without the expensive set design).

(NOTE: The actual "habitat" within the film should not be confused with the physical dwelling space of the films themselves, which are as follows: in video form, the Bs dwell upon the dreaded "inner shelves" of your local Blockbuster (or equivalent); in their cable state, they will, of course, be found at 3 AM on Cinemax.)

EARLY-WARNING SIGNS

You're getting closer now. Careful! Often, the very first moment will let you know you've sunk into darkest B-dom.

Sign #1: The screen is totally dark, as ominous music fills the soundtrack. (Remember, if you turn it off now, you could still be saved.) Suddenly, you are confronted by one of the following:

- The voiceover
- The explanatory crawl
- Or even worse:
—the explanatory crawl with accompanying voiceover.

The deep voice begins: "After the last great war, a great evil came upon the land. The devastation left only two warring factions..."

Once more, you are trapped in the worst kind of B!

Sign #2: When certain names flash upon the screen:

—Produced by Roger Corman
Now, don't get me wrong here. Roger Corman has made some great little Bs, mostly starring Vincent Price, and often (very loosely) based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe, such as *The Raven* and *The Masque of the Red Death*. Then, unfortunately, he went on to produce a lot of other films. Naughty Nurse movies. Swinging Cheerleader films. Barbarian Women flicks. And bunches of bad sci-fi, like *Carnosaur*. Not all of Roger's newer production is terrible. I would say there are maybe—three—that are worth watching (Look for a John Sayle's script). Which lends us to—

RULE #3: Sixties Corman "good," later Corman "bad."

OR the more recent the Corman film, the cheesier the B.

(And **RULE #4:** When discussing B-films, one must remember that such terms as "good" and "bad" are relative, if not completely meaningless.)

Based on an idea by Charles Band (for The Full Moon legacy).



Tank Girl! Battle Beyond the



ABOVE: Why come up with a new plot for a B-movie such as *Barb Wire* when you can borrow an old one? **LEFT:** Obviously, the Pamela Lee Anderson fiasco was merely a post-holocaust rendering of *Casablanca*.

Once there was a producer/director, Charles Band, who managed to direct one solid little science fiction film (*Trancers*), as well as acquire the distribution rights to another gem (Stuart Gordon's *The Re-Animator*). Suddenly, we found ourselves in the midst of the video revolution, and Band started the first production company devoted to regularly churning out science fiction and horror films direct to the video market. And the overall quality of these films?

Think recent Roger Corman.

Now, not every Full Moon release is a total waste of time. Those films directed by Stuart Gordon and some directed by Ted Nicolaï, and the occasional odd title like *Dark Angel*, *The Ascent* contain worthy moments. In fact, any Full Moon product might be

worth a look so long as the credits do not contain the following words:

Based on an idea by Charles Band

Immediately following these words will be a film in which you will see concepts that were better handled in: (a) other movies; (b) science fiction books; (c) comic books; (d) Saturday morning cartoons; or (e) some story your uncle told you when you were out fishing. For a concrete (and I do mean concrete) example, see my description of *Seedpeople* on the next page.

Or, better yet, turn off the video now.

(You can see the direction this discussion is taking. Therefore, let me state now that we will not be discussing Troma films in this article. Those of you who watch these have only yourselves to blame.)

OTHER DANGER SIGNS

You've made it this far and you still survive! Remember—

Rule #5: It is best to approach with EXTREME caution:

(a) any movie with a number following the title (e.g., *Carnosaur 2*, *Carnosaur 3*, *Carnosaur 7*, *Carnosaur 23*.) The first one MIGHT have been good. It most likely made money. There are no such guarantees for the sequels.

(b) any movie with *rs.* in the middle of it.

Stars! Brain Dead! Barb Wire!

King Kong Lives! Star Crash! Godzilla vs. Biolante! Battle in Outer Space!

This includes most Godzilla product, especially the later ones with monsters you've never heard of; *The Navy vs. The Night Monsters* (with Mamie Van Doren, and not as a night monster), and *Dellman vs. Demonic Toys* (based on an idea by Charles Band).

Rule #6: Be wary of name placement (a corollary to Rule #1). Many of these names seem very familiar. Many of these folks played supporting roles in big budget films. Some of those films were long ago and far away:

- ★ Rutger Hauer
- ★ Brian James
- ★ C. Thomas Howell

- ★ Wings Hauser
- ★ Billy Drago
- ★ Tracy Scoggins
- ★ Pamela Lee Anderson
- ★ Jeffrey Coombs
- ★ Jeff Fahey
- ★ Brad Doran
- ★ Dolph Lundgren
- ★ Brian Thompson
- ★ Rowdy Roddy Piper
- ★ Oliver Gruner
- ★ Tim Thomerson
- ★ Robert Z'Dar

The more of these names, and the higher up they appear in the movie's cast, the bigger the B.

These are only a sample. The list goes on and on. Also keep a lookout for some older films by these recent graduates to the A-list: Bill Paxton, Bill Pullman, Lance Henriksen (and we're not so sure about Lance).

LATER PITFALLS

Perhaps TOO late. The story, after a fashion, is making sense. If the film's a true B, the story's one of the following:

THE PLOT ("stolen")

You know. *Star Wars/Raiders of the Lost Ark/The Road Warrior/Alien/Blade Runner/Jaws*-istic Park. Why get a new plot when you can recycle a familiar one? Except without the budget. Or the stars. Or the special effects.

You'll notice that there is one sci-fi blockbuster that I don't include here—*E.T.* (Bits of other blockbusters like *Jaws* and *Close Encounters* show up all the time.)

Why?

Rule #7: Horror is easy; schmalts is hard.

THE PLOT ("original")

—(again, "original" is relative.)

They all go something like this:

Only George, with his — (PICK ONE)

- kung fu skill
- lockboding ability
- superior weaponry
- awesome mental powers
- knowledge of some peculiar little fact about the 20th century

— can save the human race!

THE PLOT ("homage")

You remember. Why get a new plot when you can recycle a familiar one? Especially a famous one from another film genre. Some examples:

Battle Beyond the Stars is *The Magnificent Seven* set in space (with Robert Vaughn reprising his earlier role!).

Barb Wire is a post-holocaust *Casablanca* (probably because Pamela Lee Anderson is so—ahem—romantic).



Gamera, Guardian of the Univ



LEFT: Robert Vaughn camps it up with the best of them in *Battle Beyond the Stars*. **ABOVE:** One thing proven by *The Navy vs. The Night Monsters* is that they sure don't make special FX like they used to.

Precious Fluid is *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* on another world (Rutger Hauer is Bogie, Brion James has the Walter Huston part. I'm telling you this so you are never tempted to watch it).

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

When you're this far in, you're probably gone, but here are the mid-film warning signs anyway:

CHARACTER SIZE

Let's face it, B movies love monsters. But a guy in a rubber suit tends to look, well, like a guy in a rubber suit, unless you: (a) shoot him only at night; (b) shoot him only through fog; or (c) change his size. The night shooting and

fog shooting generally work until the last few minutes of the film, when the audience finally gets to see the true cheapness of the monster costume. How much better to make the monster REALLY big or REALLY small, to add an extra distraction. Think dinosaurs. Think evil dolls. Or, even better (and cheaper) you can make a person REALLY big or REALLY small, and then don't have to construct any of those expensive rubber monster suits. *The Amazing Colossal Man*. *Attack of the Puppet People*.

Of course, you could also follow the lead of Roger Corman's *Carnosaur* series, and construct a cheap monster suit. Even the first *Carnosaur* has—shall we say—a rather unconvincing monster.

Full Moon is especially fond of small monsters. Small monsters, after all, don't require

big sets. Or small heroes, like *Dollman*. Then there's the never-ending *Puppetmaster* series (based on an idea by Charles Band). Which brings us to—

Rule #8: The smaller the monsters, or the hero, the bigger the B.

THE FOREIGN FACTOR

Discovered in one of two ways:

(a) It is directed by someone whose name continued on page 68

erse! Laserblast! Seedpeople!

DR. STRANGEVIDE

Continued from page 67

sounds suspiciously Italian or Japanese (or whose name is "Anthony Dawson"):

(b) the characters' lip movements don't match their voices (a.k.a. "bad dubbing").

HELPFUL EXAMPLES

All right, you've got your basic B-watching tools. Now let's put them into practice.

YOR, HUNTER FROM THE FUTURE

A caveman faces dinosaurs and other perils (his special talent is shown in the way he swings that war club) in a variation on the "wasteland" theme, the prehistoric wilderness. But wait! Maybe this isn't the distant past! Maybe this is the future—wasteland! And then there's that telltale disco score (very few "A" pictures have disco scores) with a great chorus of voices singing "YOR! YOR!" every time our hero goes into action. And look! The film's directed by Anthony Dawson! (actually a pseudonym for Antonio Margheriti).

SEEDPEOPLE

There it is, right in the credits: "Based on an idea by Charles Band." And what an ideal

Plants from outer space are taking over people. Gee, kind of like *Invasion of the Body snatchers*, huh? And the visual techniques used in the film look an awful lot like some from *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*. Both far better movies than *Seedpeople*. But boy, Charles Band does get those ideas!

GREEN SLIME

It starts promisingly enough, with an all-American cast: Robert Horton, Richard Jaeckel—well, then there's Luciana Paluzzi, but hey, there were a lot of gorgeous Italian female leads in films from the swinging '60ies. And listen to that rocking theme! "GREEN SLIME! GREEN SLIME!" But wait! There it is, at the end of the credits: Directed by Kinji Fukasaki. And the monster looks like a guy in a Japanese monster suit! Another hidden B!

Or as Leonard Maltin says (and this time I agree with him): "Not as much fun as its sounds."

CONCLUSIONS?

We have hacked our way through the video wilderness—and survived. Knowing what to look for, you may persevere, and watch another day.

You have been warned. The Bs are everywhere.

And, if you're like me, you'll watch them anyway. *

STAR SLIDER

Continued from page 59

showing anybody... It's about time I put my money where my mouth is and tried to get something going, just to demonstrate that I know what I'm talking about. I've been writing short stories lately ... and I might just try to put together a collection. I also want to put together a science fiction series."

When not pretending to be someone else, when not fighting a good cause, when the actor goes home, takes off the work coat and professional hat, who is John Rhys-Davies? "I have a lot of books. I use a computer basically as a word processor. I have two sons whom I love very much ... but how they lived to be men sometimes escapes me...there is a woman in my life and it would be nice to think that we might finally get our act together and walk off into the sunset. I have a few old cars."

"I have some land I sort of putter around on and drive the tractor from time to time, count the sheep and pretend that I'm a farmer. It just wipes the mind clear, good to taste your own lamb and dig your own potatoes."

Another passion of Rhys-Davies' is to finally get the pilot's license he's been working on for some time. "I'm so close, but then work comes up and you find yourself back a few weeks again." In fact, he had a plane crash in Africa in 1985; rather than dissuade

STAR TREK™

THE ANIMATED SERIES

Limited Edition Fine Art Seri-Cels

"A unique collectible direct from the STAR TREK™ universe. Every 'Trekkie' should have one!"
—Andrew Heim, President, Permco Consumer Products
Warning: Contains Permatint Pictures

SPECIAL OFFER

\$89.95
Each

- 30-Day Money Back Guarantee
- Certificate of Authenticity
- Permatint Pictures Seal



"U.S.S. Enterprise"

Extremely Rare Collectible!
Only 5000 Available of Each Seri-Cel!

Each is a unique hand-crafted work of art, capturing the look and feel of the original by means of a fine art illustration process. A hand-painted master scene is prepared for each individual color and then meticulously applied one layer at a time in perfect registration. The result is a collectible work of art. The cellophane scenes shown were carefully selected from the Permatint Pictures archives. After each edition size is achieved, the screens used in creating the art are destroyed to ensure the limited release.

Enjoy this ultimate STAR TREK™ Collectible for a lifetime!



"Tribble Trouble"



"At The Helm"

Limited Edition Animation Seri-Cels

For immediate shipment call: 1-800-693-2340

- ☐ Check ☐ Money Order
☐ Charge my Credit Card ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard
☐ Entenpre ☐ Tribble Trouble ☐ At The Helm

Name _____ Day Phone _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Credit Card Acct # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Please add \$8.95 for shipping and handling
and \$3.95 for tax (CA residents add)
Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery.

Send Payment to: **PERMATINT PICTURES, INC.**
10010 Canyon Ave. #101
Chatsworth, CA 91311

PERMATINT PICTURES
A Division of Permatint Industries
All Rights Reserved

him from flying, it made him take stock of his life. "It was an illuminating experience. The regrets were that I would not see my sons and my sons' sons, and that I'd not done the writing I'd promised myself I would do." But for the most part, he is very satisfied with his life, having experienced much of life's offerings. "I've been everywhere and done quite a lot. I have known truly magnificent and wonderful people, people whose personal richness illuminated my life. I have loved and been loved. It's a pretty full life and I don't think it's over yet!"

Rhys-Davies believes in approaching life with an open mind and good heart. It is not surprising that he holds Christian ideals in high regard, even though his questioning side still seeks the ultimate questions and answers of afterlife and God. "I think increasingly I am more impressed with the Ten Commandments and the extraordinary sophistication and moral supremacy of Christ's teachings. I was brought up in the Christian faith. I have not met a better set of rules for living by. In the beginning, God created the Earth; this is in the most profound sense, true. At the same time the actual mechanics of it is something that is important to find out."

Rhys-Davies has great respect for the viewing audience and implores us to take up the campaign for quality control. "There is this terrible belief that you mustn't be too clever for the audience.... If you want good value in entertainment, and good viewing,

ask for it. With the Internet, you really do have a means of feeding back directly. When you see show after show being ripped off from another film, write in... punish the people who are doing it!"

As for rumors, and an Internet chat by Tracy Torme himself, that Rhys-Davies wants to and asked to come back to *Sliders*: "I hadn't actually approached the show, I simply said that I would be very happy to come back for at least a few episodes if they would allow me to write a few. Because I could write two perfect episodes of science fiction for them that would hold a mirror up to what the show could be."

Another pleasure he found has been the world of animation, namely the voice of Macbeth in the cartoon series *Gargoyles* and on the long-running *Batman: The Animated Series*. *Gargoyles* is actually something Rhys-Davies had great fun with and would reprise the role immediately! "Gargoyles, just brilliantly written. The whole history of medieval Scotland and Macbeth, very accurately researched. And he's not the villain he was in Shakespeare. I've been very privileged to work with some very gifted people. They are so clever. They tell stories by pictures then put character words in. You can deepen them, and sometimes you improvise something and they say 'keep going'."

If that isn't enough to satisfy your desire for more Rhys-Davies, the actor has been digitized in the space combat CD-Rom game

Wing Commander IV. Not only a great game, but according to Rhys-Davies, a great acting experience. "I was very interested in watching that developing as an entirely new art form, and delighted to work with young Chris Robbins, who is a very successful program writer turned program producer/director turned filmmaker. Very different working largely in blue screen. You have to stand in an exacting place and put your hand down somewhere, because there is going to be a computer starbridge under your hand. These people are so clever." And would he go back? "Oh yes, great fun!"

Besides *Star Trek*, keep your eyes open for a new ABC half-hour comedy called *Jenifer*. "Brilliantly written. It was meant to be a guest part, but they asked me if I'd like to be a regular. I feel an obligation to help get the series under way, and I would certainly be happy to do a few of them." But don't expect to see a regular role because Rhys-Davies doesn't like the three-camera process used in comedy. "I like the method of film when you come in and sort the day's problems out, shoot it, and go home and forget about it."

With his wide and varied career, John Rhys-Davies is a storyteller at heart. "I'm egotistic enough to believe I have something to say and that what stories I could weave would be challenging and enriching and make people laugh and cry. And I'd like to have the chance to do that. I would like to make a few good films—have the creative control." ☼

THE MEDIA CONNECTION EXPO

New York City - Labor Day weekend - September 5, 6, & 7 1998
At Chelsea Piers (23rd St. and West St.)

Tickets: In Advance
\$16/day -- \$45/weekend
Reserve Seating
\$35/day -- \$75/weekend
V.I.P. Tickets - \$200
At the door
\$20/day -- \$50/weekend

Look for updates at
www.mediaconnection.net



For info, contact: Lopkin Media Enterprises,
1325 East 17th St., Suite 268, Brooklyn, NY 11230
expo@mediaconnection.net
(212) 517-1751

Reserve Ticket holders receive
guaranteed autographs as well as special promotional items.
V.I.P. tickets include 3 day reserve pass & attendance to Saturday
Night event.

Guests Include:

Ethan Phillips (*Star Trek: Voyager*)
Claudia Christian & Richard Biggs
(*Babylon 5*)
Denise Crosby (*Star Trek: TNG*)
Kari Wuhrer (*Sliders*)
Angelica Bridges (*Baywatch*)
Tim Thomerson (*Xena, Trancers*)
Frank Gorshin (*Batman, Star Trek*)
Writers and Artists attending
include:
Jim Calafore, Peter Palmiotto, John
Livesay, Dan Gofflieb, Keith Smith,
Greg Cox, Lou Small Jr., Esther
Friesner, Susan Shwartz.

MORE GUESTS TO BE ANNOUNCED

STAR TREK VOYAGER

BUILD THE SHIPS FROM THE TV HIT!

A must-have for fans and collectors. Each model is a detailed replica with authentic decal markings and display base to show it off.

3-Piece Set
85-3607



U.S.S. Voyager
85-3604

Kazon™ Torpedo
85-3608

Maquis™ Ship
85-3605

Kazon™ Raider
85-3606



Revell
MONOGRAM

www.revell-monomogram.com

Actual model kits shown.

Available at hobby shops and where model kits are sold.

TM & © 1994 Paramount Pictures. All rights reserved.
STAR TREK is a registered trademark of Paramount Pictures.

STAR TREK, STARWARS, X-FILES
PHASERS TRADING CARDS

**ACTION FIGURES
TRICORDERS
AND MUCH MORE!**

NEW EYE STUDIO
P.O. BOX 432, DEPT. SFU
WILLIMANTIC, CT 06226

Visit our Website
www.neweyestudio.com
Giant Catalog \$2.00

YOUR TICKET TO THE REAL GODZILLA!

Star Trek, Next Generation, DSG, Dr. Who, Blake's 7, Red Dwarf, Godzilla, Japanese Animation, Disney & The Beast, Quantum Leap, Dark Shadows, Universal Monsters, Thriller, Tales from the Crypt, Darkside, Outer Limits, Twilight Zone, X-Files, Highlander, Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactica, Lost in Space, Knight and many others on SALE! Earn tickets for FREE Videos! Used Videos as low as \$10! Free video search! Godzilla (1954) King of the Monsters, G vs. Mothra, G vs. Ghidorah the Three Headed Monster, Son of G, Destroy All Monsters, G vs. Monster Zero, G vs. Reptar, G vs. Megalon, G vs. Mechagodzilla, G vs. Gigan, The Terror of Mechagodzilla, G 1985, G vs. Biollante, G vs. King Ghidorah (1991), G vs. Queen Biollante (1989)

For our Unleashed Catalog, please send \$4.95 to
PAUL'S HOBBY ZONE
Dept. SU, P.O. Box 650113
West Newton, MA 02465

DR. WHO, 007, AVENGERS

AND MORE! send \$1.00 for latest catalog of sci-fi & spy movie and TV books & magazines or visit:

LARRY'S BOOK STORE
1219 W. Devon Ave., Chicago, IL 60660
www.scifispy.com

ZIPLOW
SCIENCE FICTION AUDIO CATALOG

Call Toll Free 1-800-717-4314
For a Free Color Catalog!
pre-owned Ziplow Productions
P.O. Box 7166 Hilton Head, SC 29928
www.ziplow.com

PLASTIC MODEL KITS

For sale: From and of science fiction, TV, figures, space program, movies, etc. Old and new, hundreds available FREE catalog. Also buying and trading: Green's Models, Dept. SFU, Box 25787, Riverside, CA 92517
(909) 664-5300 • (909) 667-4759 • Fax (909) 664-8018
email: SFU@greenmodels.com
website: www.greenmodels.com

TRAK Patches: Custom Embroidered

Full Color Printed T-shirts; jackets; caps
PH: (201) 436-3901 Fax: 436-3902

Ask for a FREE catalog:
Effective Graphics: PO Box 956 Bayonne, NJ 07002

You've never seen a catalog like this one!

60 pages of the coolest stuff,
the best prices, and no neck-ties ever.
All in blazing full color.
Here's just a sampling:



Cyborg Watch II
Welcome to the machine. Push a button and gleaming pistons open the cover.
10340-W \$39.95

**Night-Star™
Night Vision Scope**
See-in-the-dark power in the palm of your hand. The world's smallest. HNS-130 \$199.95



Truster™ Lie-Detector
Electronic truth serum. Hooks between your phone and your computer. Tells you who's lying and who's not.
HTS-9252 \$179.95

And over 500 other fantastic products. Tools. Gifts. Electronics. Telephone stuff. Military and historical collectibles. Knives. Swords. Lasers. Jewelry. Cars. And more. Each with a lifetime warranty.

Free!
Call our toll-free hotline for your free catalog or to place an order!
1-800-732-9976

The Edge Company
P.O. Box 806 • Bantickboro, VT 05608
www.edgeco.com

SCREAM

The X-Files meets small town America as X-alumni demonstrate their own *Disturbing Behavior*.



BY RESA NELSON

THINK ABOUT SPRINGFIELD, OREGON. Or Jonesboro, Arkansas. Or West Paducah, Kentucky. Within the past year, each town has been shattered by one or more of its own adolescents gunned down his classmates at school. The same kind of tragedy can happen any time, anywhere. It's a complex issue with no simple explanations or solutions. We're all trying to understand what's gone wrong. It's hard enough to deal with the presence of drugs and gangs in your daily life. You shouldn't have to deal with the very real possibility of sudden violence erupting when you're taking a math quiz or just trying to eat your lunch.

The world has become a disturbing place.

Now think again: What if you could do something





It takes the high school movie and fuses it with the paranoia of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

on growth that kind of tragedy from ever happening again? What if there was a way to make the "safe" behavior in kids and teenagers—to get them through their own adolescence and into a happy adult life of their own? What if the cost was the spark of their personality? The very thing that defined their individuality? What then? What would you do? This premise is at the heart of *Disturbing Behavior*, a new film scheduled for release on August 21 by MGM Pictures.

A team of TV's X-Files alumni inject *Disturbing Behavior* with a dark, eerie atmosphere. The film's music is by Mark Snow (*The X-Files*, *Millennium*), the director of photography is John S. Bartley (*The X-Files*), and the director is David Nutter (*The X-Files*, *Millennium*, *ER*, *Space: Above and Beyond*).

The story takes place in Cradle Bay, a small town that looks perfect on the outside. A little too perfect. High school student Steve Clark (James Marsden, who starred in the TV miniseries *Bell, Book and Candle*) moves with his parents to Cradle Bay after his older brother commits

suicide. Steve comes to realize that his peers' success rate is way above average. They're every parent's dream. They not only get terrific grades, but their idea of fun is to have a bake sale. Or volunteer for community service.

There's something else. Something missing. Cradle Bay is a town where drunk driving accidents never happen. Nobody overdoses on drugs.

And teenagers don't commit suicide.

Steve hooks up with the town outcasts, Gavin (Nick Stahl of *The Man Without a Face* and *Safe Passage*) and Rachel (Katie Holmes of *The Ice Storm* and TV's *Dawson's Creek*). They're all suspicious of the disturbing behavior that surrounds them.

But it's not a black-and-white issue. Like real life, it's complex, and there are no easy answers. Cradle Bay is a town with a history of tragedy. No one wants to repeat that history. Especially someone who is behind the mystery. Someone who has a more personal tragedy. The problem is that Steve's parents are close to being convinced that it's in his

best interest to become the next "Blue Ribbon" teenager.

Several years ago, producer Jon Shestack (*Air Force One*, *Playing God*, *The Last Seduction*) got the idea for *Disturbing Behavior* when he was on the brink of getting married and becoming a stepfather overnight. At that time, Ritalin and Prozac were popular solutions for kids whose behavior caused problems for themselves and their classmates. "*Disturbing Behavior* takes the Ritalin generation to the next level, and in this case the teenagers have a very good and legitimate reason to be paranoid about what their parents are planning for them," Shestack says.

Screenwriter Scott Rosenberg (*Can Air, Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*, *Beautiful Girls*) was hooked when Shestack called him with the idea. "It takes the high school movie and fuses it with the paranoia of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The conceit



of the movie makes perfect sense. There are parents who are looking for that panacea... the one magic pill, as it were, that would change their kids from bad kids into good kids. And I think they'd be willing to give up basically the kid's personality to achieve that. In other words, if you were guaranteed that your kid would go to Harvard, would letter in three sports, and go off to become a very successful, productive human being at the loss of some of the more wild aspects of being young, I think people would do that.

Despite the fact that Shestack originally pitched the concept as "the Steptford kids," don't mistake *Disturbing Behavior* for a Steptford clone. "*The Steptford Wives* was Ira Levin's commentary on the homogeneity of suburbia in the '60s," Rosenberg notes. "It had just become a way of life in America. Women weren't working at the time. It was almost like a response to women's lib."

While *The Steptford Wives* was about men who wanted to control their wives as a mat-

ter of personal gain, *Disturbing Behavior* is about parents who are desperately looking for a way to give their children a fighting chance for their future. It's also about what it's like to be a teenager.

"You try and put something of yourself, what's dear to you in the thing," Rosenberg says. "A lot of the characters were loosely based on people I went to high school with."

"Adolescence is a very paranoid time. As a kid, you're just naturally paranoid, because you're not sure of what's going on around you. Certainly not of what's going on within your own body."

Director David Nutter echoes that sentiment. "When I look at a project, I always try to find a deeper meaning: not what's on the page, but what's between the lines. What I found in this script was that the true aliens among us are the teenagers."

Nutter brings his vast experience in directing science fiction and horror to the film. But instead of dealing with extraterrestrials or monsters, he's focusing on the nightmares that can arise from the generation gap.

"My goal was to try to do a movie about teenagers and not play them down. Pictures about teens can be done in a very juvenile way. Respect the audience, respect their intelligence, and respect the fact that they want to be not only entertained but also they want their mind to work when they're watching and to think about things. My goal is to give them a story that was maybe harder than the average film or maybe something that affected them emotionally, as well: watching young people that they could relate to."

This is Nutter's debut as a feature film director. He chose Rosenberg's script from a slew of screenplays that were sent to him as a result of his highly successful television career.

"I'd been sent several of Scott Rosenberg's screenplays. He's a real powerful writer and has done a lot of great things. This was



something that touched me." Just as the success of *The X-Files* depends so much on the relationship between Mulder and Scully, Nutter was intrigued by the characters in *Disturbing Behavior*. "The *X-Files* is dramatic storytelling of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. The audience has to relate to that. They have to believe what they're saying. Believe that these people are committed to what they're doing. They're passionate about what they do. They can see themselves in these people, and they become emotionally involved. Then the action becomes real and it matters. In this movie, I want to crack the very hard shell of teenagers, who have been let down so many times. They don't expect very much. They don't expect to be affected. They have their guard up. My hope is that [*Disturbing Behavior* will touch] teenagers who haven't been affected in a long time."

Because Nutter has vast experience with several successful TV series, directing a

Continued on page 77

PREVIOUS SPREAD, RIGHT: Lorna

Langley (Crystal Cass) freaks out. **PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEFT:**

Special makeup FX artist Toby Lindala prepares a prosthetic head. **THIS PAGE:**

Steve Clark (James Marsden) suspects; Director David Nutter (center) on the set; Lindala prepares Carly Pope's prosthetic; Clark as an unwilling subject on the operating table.



SCI-FI'S FALL TV REVIEWS

Continued from page 47

The Sci-Fi Channel's other original weekly effort that's currently in production is *Stingers*, which against the odds began its 4th season back in June. Now about half-way through the season's 22 episodes, expect to see more of Quinn's (Jerry O'Connell) new-found brother (played by O'Connell's real-life brother, Charlie O'Connell) as the *Stingers*—including returning 3rd-season cast members Karl Wuhler and Cleavant Derricks—continue their search for a way to defeat the Kromaggs, who've taken over Quinn's home Earth.

Other programs to keep an eye out for from the Sci-Fi Channel are: a new *Alien Voices* radio-style drama starring Leonard Nimoy, John DeLancie, and other sci-fi industry names, which will air on the Sci-Fi Channel during the Channel's online convention Sci-Fi Con3 (conducted via the Dominion Web site at www.scifi.com); *Fitscape*, an original series being done in conjunction with Henson Productions UK which is due early next year; two more installments of the ongoing, thematic, two-hour, paranormal special *Sightings*; and ongoing weekly episodes of the half-hour genre magazine show, *Sci-Fi Entertainment*, which is hosted by Chase Masterson (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*) and Scott Mantz.

Highlander continues to endure with a spin-off of the highly successful syndicated *Highlander: The Series*, from Rysker Entertainment. In *Highlander: The Raven*, Duncan MacLeod passes the sword to the franchise to a beautiful Immortal, Amanda (Elizabeth Gracen, a former Miss America who has appeared in *Highlander*), and her mortal partner, Nick Wolfe (*Beverly Hills 90210*'s Paul Johansson). They're an unlikely pair—she's a 1,200-year-old thief, he's an ex-cop who found the legal system unwieldy and criminal. Together, they strive to fulfill the ancient prophecy of the Immortals while waging their own war against injustice. The show is cleared for syn-



LEFT: When a joltback in Hell releases demons on Earth, Brimstone must track them down. BELOW: After two hit movies, The Crow swoons to enact his vengeance on your TV screen.

dication in 92 percent of the country.

PolyGram Television resurrects the fable of *The Crow* for the weekly one-hour syndicated drama, *The Crow: Swooning to Heaven*. Bryce Zabel, the impassioned executive producer of the short-lived *Dark Skies*, serves as executive producer on the series; Edward R. Pressman, who was involved in both of *The Crow* features, is also executive producing. The story line picks up from the story found in the features: Eric Draven (Mark Dacascos) and his beloved Shelly are brutally murdered. While she ascends to heaven, he remains earthbound, searching for salvation by helping others who cannot fight for themselves; only in this way can he be reunited with Shelly, who in the interim serves as his guardian angel.

Another new syndicated sci-fi series comes from Alliance Television, which is producing *Total Recall: The Series*. Details were still being finalized at press time, but the one-hour series will be based on the hit Arnold Schwarzenegger film.

Other syndicated favorites that are returning include the enduring fantasy hours of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Also on the docket: *Young Hercules*, which explores the misadventures of Hercules's youth. *

BLADE

Continued from page 53

Sonja Hays brought to life the "soldier-minimalist" wardrobe created by both Norrington and Goyer. "I thought he [Blade] would have a sort of geometric, neoprene-meets-SWAT-Team appearance. [Blade's trenchcoat] has a style, which is uniquely Blade. It's also functional, with all these pockets and compartments where Blade stashes his weapons. Plus, it's lightweight, which is critical for Wesley since he wears it during many of the heavy action sequences."

Adding to that look is Blade's custom motorcycle, created by Petruccielli.

"It's a composite of a Harley and a very high-end, Italian racing bike. It's monochromatic, in gray and silver tones. And it's a reflection of Blade: tough, yet agile. It's radical." Considering that the script calls for the bike to spin acrobatically in a confined space while reaching speeds in excess of 150 miles per hour, that may not be an inaccurate description.

Then, there are the weapons—which are always popular with action movie fans.

"[The weapons] are not glossy or streamlined," admits Petruccielli. "They're handmade, well-crafted, and utilitarian. They're practical."

"He's got this rifle with a stake launcher and all these other deadly toys," reveals Seipes. "Blade is a really big soldier."

Or as Kristofferson puts it—after seeing his well-stocked abode for the first time—"It's awesome."

Despite all the glitz and glamour, Seipes feels that the success of the film hinges on whether or not the fans accept the character. "Blade is a tormented soul. He's got this internal struggle going on between his good side and his bad side. Blade shows us glimpses of his humanity. He knows it's his saving grace, but it's also potentially his weakness. He's battling these demons who have no mercy, and in order to conquer them he has to think like they do."

And if fan acceptance is based on how well Snipes portrays the tortured Blade, then things look good for the film. "Wesley had a really strong take on the character, and he's given Blade some subtle, interesting mannerisms. Wesley inhabited Blade. He became Blade."

In the end, the creators feel that they have succeeded at what they set out to do. Explains Frankfurt, "Stephen Norrington has delivered a film which is a fabulous illusion yet seems like reality. It's eerie and disturbing, because it's so real, it makes you consider the possibility that vampires really do exist."

Snipes agrees, "Blade presents a shadow world where the bridge between what's real and what's unreal is very small. It's got everything: great acting, great action, pumping music. It's an entertainment smorgasbord."

Promises Snipes, "There's more to come. Blade will be back!" *



Avengers

Continued from page 39

script he was cutting another film. Usually a director won't read a script when he's doing that, but he called me three hours later saying, 'Don't give it to anybody else, I'll be in your office tomorrow.' He was jacked to do this picture. He knew the era and *The Avengers* very well."

A supporter of Amnesty International and an environmentalist, Chechik was living in Canada when he first saw *The Avengers*. Talking to me by phone from London, where he's finalizing shots and finishing the score with the London Philharmonic, Chechik told me that he grew up watching shows like *Danger Man* and *The Saint*. He starts humming the guitar licks from the *Danger Man* theme. I join in. He then jovially adds, "But of course I was smitten with Diana Rigg, as most pubescent boys were. It left an everlasting impression on me. I was a big fan, maybe more so than Americans, because back in the sixties we were more British Commonwealth-ish so it was sort of our show. We still have the Queen on our money."

"We studied the show's tone, that kind of clever, surreal, sexual innuendo with obfuscated plots, bigger-than-life characterizations, and abstract things. The script's retro-sixties atmosphere was right out of my pubescent years, and I wanted to capture this world on film and make a sophisticated pop movie. It was my responsibility to try to translate the extreme Britishness of the show and what that represented metaphorically to the world, but to also do something that works for an American pop kind of culture."

When I query Chechik as to how he accomplished that, he jovially answers, "I don't know. The challenge was balancing the sophis-

tication and grace of Noel Coward's dialogue between Steed and Peel and juxtaposing that on the big palate pop set pieces that come from the story and visual iconography."

Part of the show's vision was its gratuitous and edgy violence, something TV viewers were not accustomed to at the time. When someone got shot, they'd fly back into, say, a shelf of paint cans and die amid dripping rainbow colors. Cybernaut robots would slashingly pound righteous dogooders into the ground while the Winged Avenger would "Eee-urpingly" shred its victims' faces with his eagle claws. Thank God Mrs. Peel knew how to fight with magnetic boots!

Chechik describes how this mood carried over and translated to the film. "We choreograph the action like you would a dance routine and practice for weeks. When we shoot it we do it with a master shot then the details. But when we are shooting we can change the original sensibility of what is actually happening. We did a lot of sword fighting in this. Ralph is an excellent fencer from stage. Steed himself is a guy that can fight five guys without breaking a sweat. And yes, he does use his umbrella. It's all ballet, and not just hard-ass punching. It's slipping, sliding, and dodging. Uma is a kick-butt lady but not a karate expert. She fights on a high wire."

Says Finnes of the violent ballet, "We didn't have much preparation time for fights. The stunt guys work out the fights, I come in, watch it, then do it. There's two long extended fights. One's a playful fight between myself and Uma and the very serious sword fight near the end between myself and Sean. I loved the physical action and really had a great time doing the fight with Sean."

In closing, the self-proclaimed techno-buff Chechik shares with us the message of the film. "Oh yes," he chortles, "If you get control of the weather, be nice and always be polite." Like *The Avengers*, being polite is a very British thing. *

SCREEN TOO

Continued from page 75

feature film posed a different problem. "Walking into a movie situation becomes a very tough deal with the fact that not everybody has the same point of view. I've found the most successful things I've done involved everyone being on the same page. We're all singing the same song, singing in the same tone, and all telling the same story. It was a challenge to me to make sure we all had that one voice. It's all about passion. It's about being passionate about what you're doing."

"Hopefully, people will watch the film and they'll care about the people they're watching."

Rosenberg has waited a long time to see *Disturbing Behavior* on the screen, unlike his other scripts that have been produced. "I was pretty fortunate. I had three other movies made. I wrote them, and they got made very, very quickly. This was five years in the making." Originally, Rosenberg wrote the script for another studio, which eventually abandoned the project. "The studio decided they weren't interested in making relatively low-budget horror movies at the time." But times change. When the movie *Scream* rocketed to success, the new life it gave to the horror genre paved the way for the resurrection of *Disturbing Behavior*.

"We worked with two or three directors until we settled on [Nutter]. So each time, each director has his notions. It was an exercise in constant rewriting. Most of the stuff that was really true for me survived."

Nutter bubbles enthusiastically about what he considers to be the most rewarding aspect of directing *Disturbing Behavior*. "Working with the actors. They gave me strength to carry on. They were really fantastic. James Marsden, Katie Holmes, and Nick Stahl were a dream to work with, as well as all the other actors."

"People who go to see any kind of thriller will find this very entertaining. It hits every note on the keyboard. It's scary but it's suspenseful. Compelling. It has a wonderful romance, and it's very, very funny. It's got all kinds of things in it that will attract different people for many reasons."

Shostack says, "The spirit of the piece is that parents can't expect their kids to be the best by taking a pill, going to a seminar, or listening to a couple of inspirational audiotapes. It's hard to be the right kind of human and ultimately it's not something you can purchase, which is what the parents in this movie try to do. To be the best is to be yourself, not somebody you're not."

When asked about the movie's greatest strength, Rosenberg responds without hesitation. "The questions that it raises. I think at the end of the day, if people [see the movie] and say, 'You know what? I know it's bad, but on one hand, it makes perfect sense,' then I think we will have succeeded." *

BELOW: In battle, Jonathan Steed (Ralph Fiennes) wields the Englishman's traditional black umbrella as an improvised deadly weapon.



Fear and Loathing of Merchandising Overdoses.

A few weeks ago (as you read this, not as I write this), I stopped in my local comic shop, ostensibly to pick up the new issue of Warren Ellis's vicious comic *Transmetropolitan*, and took a quick look around. In the front of the store was a huge pile of *Godzilla* junk, emphasis on the last word: big action figures of *Godzilla*, small action figures, figures of all the characters, and a whole load of garbage with the new official *Godzilla* logo plastered on it. A normal person would have just curled a lip at the stuff, noted how the new *Godzilla* looked as if someone dropped a huge anvil on the head of the old Big G (was I the only one who kinda looked forward to seeing William Stout's sleek, dinosaurian designs intended for the stillborn 1983 3-D movie?), and wandered on. Me, I had to go up to the counter, peer over my sunglasses at the long-suffering clerk, and ask, "So where are the Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas action figures? I want my Rude Puke, Doctor Gonzo figure!"

(Yes, I'm a monster in toy shops; this is almost as much fun as wandering into a Blockbuster Music, waiting for the happy clerk to ask if he can help me, and

then responding, "Yes, you wouldn't have a copy of *The Bulldaggers' Beach Crimes*, would you?" Hey, it beats harassing college guidance counselors about getting a scholarship to Miskatonic University, okay?)

Over the past 15 years, when I first saw *Return of the Jedi* as a marketing vehicle instead of a movie, I've become accustomed to seeing the Big Summer Movie offer, in the words of Joe Bob Briggs, absolutely no plot to get in the way of the story. If *Batman*, *Total Recall*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Independence Day* had anything but clichés to power them, it might make the audience's heads hurt, and that gets in the way of selling loads of officially licensed trash before the video release. Not that I'm calling for an end to Big Summer Movies, but what about some merchandise for the rest of us?

Let's bring up *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as an example: As I write this, it seems to be doing quite well in competition with *Godzilla*, but we're sadly lacking in merchandise. No tie-ins with Ray-Ban or Cadillac, no action figures, no Happy Meal toys or coloring books: Somebody at Universal really screwed up on this one.



ABOVE: Forget Ripley action figures—it's time for Hunter Thompson. BELOW: Bye, bye, *Jurassic Park*. Hello, drunken dinosaurs.

(And please don't give me the riot act about making toy lines for R-rated movies: If that's the case, then why have we seen toy lines based on *Aliens*, *Predator*, *Rambo*, *Robocop*, and *Terminator*? Hell, I have to recommend the *Warrior* Bug figure from the *Starship Troopers* line: It's the only thing ugly enough to keep my cats off the kitchen table.)

It's bad enough that we never got a line of Brazil remote control vehicles or *Twelve Monkeys* underwear; Terry Gilliam deserves more, as he has a rather fanatical following (including the present chronicler) who'd gleefully buy up the whole stock of *Fear and Loathing* stuff at Toys "R" Us. That is, the stuff that the stockers didn't reserve for the toy speculators.

It just goes on and on: MTV loads us up to the gills with *Bravis & Butt-Head* items, but what about *Daria* mouse pads and notebooks? The stores are overloaded with *Spawn* trips, so where are the *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* play sets? We get oodles of talking *Star Trek* dolls, but why no talking *Babylon* 5 figures?

I submit that if Warner Brothers were to license more *Babylon* 5 stuff, then a talking Vorlon figure would become one of the

biggest-selling office toys since the Bill Gates voodoo doll. Seeing as how any phrase uttered by the Kosh doll could be interpreted in any possible way, just as with the babbings of real psychics, it'd blow the hell out of Magic 8-Balls. Picture this scene in an upper manager's office, as he holds his Kosh doll before him:

"Davis is trying to get a promotion. What should I do?"

"Knowledge is a three-edged sword."

"So I should fire him?"

"If you go to Z'ha'Dum, you will die."

"Okay, so what should I say to that offer from IBM?"

"Evil-doers, you face The Tick."

To everyone in the toy industry, keep this in mind: The readers of *Sci-Fi Universe* now have money for the first time in 10 years, and we ain't afraid to spend it. Give us that line of *Fear and Loathing* action figures (which, in my case, will go right alongside my *Clockwork Orange* lunchbox and my *Re-Animator* coin bank), or we're going to get upset.

Paul T. Riddell

SQUASHED ARMADILLO, PAUL T. RIDDELL'S RATHER PATHETIC TRIBUTE TO *FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS*, IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT WWW.CYBERRAMP.NET/~PRIDDELL.



THE X-FILES™

FIGHT THE FUTURE

For a limited time, Reel Images is proud to offer our collectible alien maquette from THE X-FILES movie. This creature stands 15" tall and is reproduced in handcrafted resin.

The artists of Amalgamated Dynamics, Inc., who did the creature effects for the film, worked under the direction of Ten Thirteen Productions to create the alien's look. This figurine is hand-painted and molded directly from their final sculpture.

This exclusive reproduction is authenticated by Twentieth Century Fox and forever limited to just 25,000 pieces. It's available now for \$144, payable in four monthly installments of just \$36*. Order yours today before they vanish. Earliest orders will receive lowest serial numbers.

Three convenient ways to order: mail the attached order form, call us toll-free at (888) 274-4463 or visit us at www.reel-images.com. Your satisfaction is guaranteed.

Reel Images, 2018 Santa Ana Cyn. Rd. Suite 100-157
Anaheim Hills, CA 92808

Please send me one X-Files Alien Figurine for \$144 plus \$15 shipping and handling. CA orders add 7.34% sales tax.

☐ Check or money order enclosed payable to Reel Images.

Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AmEx ☐ Discover

☐ Bill me four monthly installments (credit cards only).

CARD # _____

EXP. DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

PHONE # () _____

Please allow 6 to 10 weeks after initial payment for shipment.

*\$15 shipping and handling will be added to first payment, which is due prior to shipment. CA orders will be billed 7.34% sales tax.



